

Coldness and Cruelty

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Foreword

Most of the information on the life of Sacher-Masoch comes to us from his secretary, Schlichtegroll (*Sacher-Masoch and der Masochismus*) and from his first wife, who took the name of the heroine of *Kenar in Furi*, Wanda (Wanda von Sacher-Masoch, *Confessions of My Life*). Wanda's book is excellent, but it was severely judged by subsequent biographers, who often merely present us with subjective impressions of the work. In their opinion, the image she offers of herself is too innocent, and they assumed her to be a sadist, since Masoch was a masochist. But this may well be a misstatement of the problem.

Lenpold von Sacher-Masoch was born in 1835 in Lemberg, Galicia. He was of Slav, Spanish and Bohemian descent. His ancestors held official positions in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. His father was Chief of Police of Lemberg, and as a child he witnessed prison scenes and riots which were to have a profound effect on him. His work is deeply influenced by the problems of nationalities, minority groups and revolutionary movements in the Empire, hence his Galician, Jewish, Hungarian, Prussian tales, etc. He often describes the organization of agricultural communes and the struggle of the peasants against the Austrian administration and especially against the landowners. He became involved in the Pan-Slavic movement. The men he admired, besides Goethe,

were Pushkin and Lermantov, and he was known himself as the Turgenev of Little Russia.

He was appointed Professor of History at Graz and began his literary career by writing historical novels. He met with rapid success: one of his first genre novels, *The Divorced Woman* (1870) aroused interest even in America; in France, Hachette, Calmann-Lévy and Flammarion published translations of his novels and stories. One of his translators was able to present him as a strict moralist who drew his inspiration from history and folklore, without making the slightest allusion to the erotic character of his works. His fantasies were probably made more acceptable by the fact that they could be attributed to the spirit of the Slav people. We must also take into account the more general explanation that the standards of "censorship" and tolerance of the nineteenth century were very different from our own; diffuse sexuality being more acceptable than specific physical and mental details.

In the language of Masoch's folklore, history, politics, mysticism, eroticism, nationalism and perversion are closely intermingled, forming a nebula around the scenes of flagellation; he was consequently disturbed when Krafft-Ebing used his name to designate a perversion. Masoch was a famous and honored writer; in 1886 he made a triumphant journey to Paris where he was decorated and entertained by the *Figaro* and the *Revue des Deux Mondes*.

Masoch's tastes in matters of love are well known; he enjoyed pretending to be a bear or a bandit or having himself pursued, tied up and subjected to punishments, humiliations and even acute physical pain by an opulent fur-clad woman with a whip; he was given to dressing up as a servant, making use of all kinds of fetishes and disguises, placing advertisements in newspapers, signing contracts with the women in his life and if need be prostituting them.

An affair with Anna von Kottowitz inspired *The Divorced Woman*, another affair, with Fanny von Pistor, *Venus in Furs*. Then a young lady by the name of Aurore Rümelin approached him by means of a somewhat ambiguous correspondence, took the pseudonym of Wanda, and married Masoch in 1873. As a companion she was at once docile, demanding and overwhelmed. Masoch was fated to be disappointed as though the masquerades he planned were bound to give rise to misunderstandings. He was always attempting to introduce a third party into his ménage, the character he calls "the Greek." During his period with Anna von Kottowitz, a sham Polish count entered their life, revealing himself later to be a chemist's assistant wanted for theft and dangerously ill. Then there is the strange adventure involving Aurore/Wanda, the hero of which appears to be Ludwig II of Bavaria; the story is included among the appendices to this book. Here again the ambivalence of the characters, the disguises, the parrying of the parties involved turn the whole episode into an extraordinary ballet ending in disappointment. Finally there is the adventure with Armand of the *Figaro*, of which Wanda gives an excellent account, leaving the reader to make his own amendments. This episode was the reason for Masoch's journey to Paris in 1886, and it also marks the end of his union with Wanda; in 1887 he married his children's governess. In a novel by Myrlam Harry, *Sonia in Berlin*, we find an interesting portrait of Masoch in retirement. He died in 1895, saddened by the neglect into which his work had fallen.

And yet his writings are important and unusual. He conceived of them as a cycle or rather as a series of cycles. The principal one is entitled *The Heritage of Cain* and was to have treated six themes: love, property, money, the State, war and death; only the first two parts were finished, but the other four themes can already be discerned in them. The folktales and the ethnic tales

form secondary cycles; they include in particular two somber novels dealing with mystical sects in Galicia which rank among the best of Masoch's works and reach heights of anguish and tension rarely equaled elsewhere (*The Father of Souls* and *The Mother of God*). What is the meaning of the term "heritage of Cain"? It is intended first to express the burden of crime and suffering inherited by humanity; however, this apparent cruelty conceals the more secret theme of the coldness of Nature, of the steppe, of the icy image of the Mother wherein Cain discovers his own destiny; the coldness of the stern mother is in reality a transmutation of cruelty from which the new man emerges. The "mark" of Cain indicates how the "heritage" is to be used. Cain and Christ bear the same mark, which leads to the crucifixion of Man "who knows no sexual love, no property, no fatherland, no cause, no work; who dies of his own willing, embodying the idea of humanity..."

The work of Masoch draws on all the forces of German Romanticism. In our opinion, no other writer has used to such effect the resources of fantasy and suspense. He has a particular way of "desexualizing" love and at the same time sexualizing the entire history of humanity.

Venus in Furs (*Venus im Pelz*, 1870) is one of Masoch's most famous novels. It forms part of the first volume of *The Heritage of Cain*, which deals with the subject of love. A translation by the economist R. Ledos de Beaufort appeared simultaneously in French and in English in 1902, but it was extremely inaccurate. The present version is a translation from the French of a subsequent translation by Aude Willm. The novel is followed by three appendices: the first is a general statement by Masoch on the novel, followed by an account of a scene from his childhood. The second con-

gists of the "love contracts" that Masoch signed with Fanny von Pistor and Wanda. The third appendix is Wanda Sacher-Masoch's account of the adventure with Ludwig II.

Masoch has been treated unjustly, not because his name was unfairly given to the perversion of masochism, but quite the reverse, because his work fell into neglect whereas his name passed into current usage. Although we occasionally find books written on Sade that show no knowledge of his work, this is increasingly rare. Sade is becoming more thoroughly known; clinical studies of sadism are considerably enriched by literary studies of the work of Sade, and vice versa. Even the best writings on Masoch, however, show a surprising ignorance of his work.

Sade and Masoch are not merely cases among others; they both have something essential to teach us, the one about masochism and the other about sadism. The second reason why Masoch's fate is unjust is that in clinical terms he is considered complementary to Sade. This may indeed be the reason why people who are interested in Sade show no particular interest in Masoch. It is too readily assumed that the symptoms only have to be transposed and the instincts reversed for Masoch to be turned into Sade, according to the principle of the unity of opposites. The theme of the unity of sadism and masochism and the concept of a sado-masochistic entity have done great harm to Masoch. He has suffered not only from unjust neglect but also from an unfair assumption of complementarity and dialectical unity with Sade.

As soon as we read Masoch we become aware that his universe has nothing to do with that of Sade. Their techniques differ, and their problems, their concerns and their intentions are entirely dissimilar. It is not valid to object that psychoanalysis has long shown the possibility and the reality of transformations between sadism and masochism; we are questioning the very concept of an entity known as sado-masochism. Medicine distinguishes between

syndromes and symptoms, a symptom being the specific sign of an illness, and a syndrome the meeting-place or crossing-point of manifestations issuing from very different origins and arising within variable contexts. We would like to suggest that sado-masochism is a syndrome that ought to be split up into irreducible causal chains. It has been stated so often that sadism and masochism are found in the same person that we have come to believe it. We need to go back to the beginning and read Sade and Masoch. Because the judgment of the clinician is prejudiced, we must take an entirely different approach, the *literary approach*, since it is from literature that stem the original definitions of sadism and masochism. It is no accident that the names of two writers were used as labels for these two perversions. The critical (in the literary sense) and the clinical (in the medical sense) may be destined to enter into a new relationship of mutual learning. Symptomatology is always a question of art; the clinical specificities of sadism and masochism are not separable from the literary values peculiar to Sade and Masoch. In place of a dialectic which all too readily perceives the link between opposites, we should aim for a critical and clinical appraisal able to reveal the truly differential mechanisms as well as the artistic originalities.

The Language of Sade and Masoch

"It is too idealistic....and therefore cruel."

Dostoevsky, *The Injured and Injured*

What are the uses of literature? The names of Sade and Masoch have been used to denote two basic perversions, and as such they are outstanding examples of the efficiency of literature. Illnesses are sometimes named after typical patients, but more often it is the doctor's name that is given to the disease (Roger's disease, Parkinson's disease, etc.). The principles behind this labeling deserve closer analysis. The doctor does not invent the illness, he dissociates symptoms that were previously grouped together, and links up orders that were dissociated. In short he builds up a profoundly original clinical picture. The history of medicine can therefore be regarded under at least two aspects. The first is the history of illnesses, which may disappear, become less frequent, reappear or alter their form according to the state of the society and the development of therapeutic methods. Intertwined with this history is the history of symptomatology, which sometimes precedes and sometimes follows changes in therapy or in the nature of diseases: symptoms are named, renamed and regrouped in various ways. Progress from this point of view generally means

a tendency toward greater specificity, and indicates a refinement of symptomatology. (Thus the plague and leprosy were more common in the past not only for historical and social reasons but because one tended to group under these headings various types of diseases now classified separately.) Great clinicians are the greatest doctors: when a doctor gives his name to an illness this is a major linguistic and semiological step, inasmuch as a proper name is linked to a given group of signs, that is, a proper name is made to connote signs.

Should we therefore class Sade and Masoch among the great clinicians? It is difficult to treat sadism and masochism on a level with the plague, leprosy and Parkinson's disease; the word disease is clearly inappropriate. Nevertheless, Sade and Masoch present unparalleled configurations of symptoms and signs. In coining the term masochism, Krafft-Ebing was giving Masoch credit for having redefined a clinical entity not merely in terms of the link between pain and sexual pleasure, but in terms of something more fundamental connected with bondage and humiliation (there are limiting cases of masochism without algolagnia and even algolagnia without masochism).¹ Another question we should ask is whether Masoch does not present a symptomatology that is more refined than Sade's in that it enables us to discriminate between disturbances which were previously regarded as identical. In any case whether Sade and Masoch are "patients" or clinicians or both, they are also great anthropologists, of the type whose work succeeds in embracing a whole conception of man, culture and nature; they are also great artists in that they discovered new forms of expression, new ways of thinking and feeling and an entirely original language.

In principle, violence is something that does not speak, or speaks but little, while sexuality is something that is little spoken about. Sexual modesty cannot be related to biological fear, oth-

erwise it would not be formulated as it is: "I am less afraid of being touched and even of being seen than of being put into words." What is the meaning of the meeting of violence and sexuality in such excessive and abundant language as that of Sade and Masoch? How are we to account for the violent language linked with eroticism? In a text that ought to invalidate all theories relating Sade to Nazism, Georges Bataille explains that the language of Sade is paradoxical because it is essentially that of a victim. Only the victim can describe torture; the torturer necessarily uses the hypocritical language of established order and power. "As a general rule the torturer does not use the language of the violence exerted by him in the name of an established authority; he uses the language of the authority. . . . The violent man is willing to keep quiet and connives at cheating. . . . Thus Sade's attitude is diametrically opposed to that of the torturer. When Sade writes he refuses to cheat, but he attributes his own attitude to people who in real life could only have been silent and uses them to make self-contradictory statements to other people."²

Ought we to conclude that the language of Masoch is equally paradoxical in this instance because the victim speaks the language of the torturer he is to himself, with all the hypocrisy of the torturer?

What is known as pornographic literature is a literature reduced to a few imperatives (do this, do that) followed by obscene descriptions. Violence and eroticism do meet, but in a rudimentary fashion. Imperatives abound in the work of Sade and Masoch; they are issued by the cruel libertine or by despotic woman. Descriptions also abound (although the function of the descriptions as well as the nature of their obscenity are strikingly different in the two authors). It would appear that both for Sade and for Masoch language reaches its full significance when it acts directly on the senses. Sade's *The One Hundred and Twenty Days of*

Sodom hinges on tales told to the libertines by "women chroniclers," and in principle the heroes may not take any initiative in anticipation of these tales. Words are at their most powerful when they compel the body to repeat the movements they suggest, and "the sensations communicated by the ear are the most enjoyable and have the keenest impact." In Masoch's life as well as in his fiction, love affairs are always set in motion by anonymous letters, by the use of pseudonyms or by advertisements in newspapers. They must be regulated by contracts that formalize and verbalize the behavior of the partners. Everything must be stated, promised, announced and carefully described before being accomplished. However, the work of Sade and Masoch cannot be regarded as pornography; it merits the more exalted title of "pornology" because its erotic language cannot be reduced to the elementary functions of ordering and describing.

With Sade we witness an astonishing development of the demonstrative use of language. Demonstration as a higher function of language makes its appearance between sequences of description, while the libertines are resting, or in the interval between two commands. One of the libertines will read out a severe pamphlet, or expound inexhaustible theories, or draft a constitution. Alternatively he may agree to hold a conversation or a discussion with his victim. Such moments are frequent, particularly in *Justine*, where each of the heroine's torturers uses her as a listener and confidante. The libertine may put on an act of trying to convince and persuade; he may even proselytize and gain new recruits (as in *Philosophy in the Bedroom*). But the intention to convince is merely apparent, for nothing is in fact more alien to the sadist than the wish to convince, to persuade, in short to educate. He is interested in something quite different, namely to demonstrate that reasoning itself is a form of violence, and that he is on the side of violence, however calm and logical he may

be. He is not even attempting to prove anything to anyone, but to perform a demonstration related essentially to the solitude and omnipotence of its author. The point of the exercise is to show that the demonstration is identical to violence. It follows that the reasoning does not have to be shared by the person to whom it is addressed any more than pleasure is meant to be shared by the object from which it is derived. The acts of violence inflicted on the victims are a mere reflection of a higher form of violence to which the demonstration testifies. Whether he is among his accomplices or among his victims, each libertine, while engaged in reasoning, is caught in the hermetic circle of his own solitude and uniqueness — even if the argumentation is the same for all the libertines. In every respect, as we shall see, the sadistic "instructor" stands in contrast to the masochistic "educator."

Here, again, Bataille says of Sade: "It is a language which repudiates any relationship between speaker and audience." Now if it is true that this language is the supreme realization of a demonstrative function to be found in the relation between violence and eroticism, then the other aspect, the language of imperatives and descriptions, appears in a new light. It still remains, but in an entirely dependent role, steeped in the demonstrative element, as it were, floating in it. The descriptions, the attitudes of the bodies, are merely living diagrams illustrating the abominable descriptions; similarly the imperatives uttered by the libertine are like the statements of problems referring back to the more fundamental chain of sadistic theorems: "I have demonstrated it theoretically," says Noircœur, "let us now put it to the test of practice."

We have therefore to distinguish two factors constituting a dual language. The first, the imperative and descriptive factor, represents the *personal* element; it directs and describes the personal violence of the sadist as well as his individual tastes; the second and higher factor represents the *impersonal* element in sad-

ism and identifies the impersonal violence with an idea of pure reason, with a terrifying demonstration capable of subordinating the first element. In Sade we discover a surprising affinity with Spinoza — a naturalistic and mechanistic approach imbued with the mathematical spirit. This accounts for the endless repetitions, the reiterated quantitative process of multiplying illustrations and adding victim upon victim, again and again retracing the thousand circles of an irreducibly solitary argument. Krafft-Ebing sensed the essential nature of such a process: "In certain cases the personal element is almost entirely absent. The subject gets sexual enjoyment from beating boys and girls, but the purely impersonal element of his perversion is much more in evidence. . . . While in most individuals of this type the feelings of power are experienced in relation to specific persons, we are dealing here with a pronounced form of sadism operating to a great extent in geographical and mathematical patterns."³

In the work of Masoch there is a similar transcendence of the imperative and the descriptive toward a higher function. But in this case it is all persuasion and education. We are no longer in the presence of a torturer seizing upon a victim and enjoying her all the more because she is unconsenting and unpersuaded. We are dealing instead with a victim in search of a torturer and who needs to educate, persuade and conclude an alliance with the torturer in order to realize the strangest of schemes. This is why advertisements are part of the language of masochism while they have no place in true sadism, and why the masochist draws up contracts while the sadist abominates and destroys them. The sadist is in need of institutions, the masochist of contractual relations. The middle ages distinguished with considerable insight between two types of commerce with the devil: the first resulted from possession, the second from a pact of alliance. The sadist thinks in terms of institutionalized possession, the masochist in

terms of contracted alliance. Possession is the sadist's particular form of madness just as the pact is the masochist's. It is essential to the masochist that he should fashion the woman into a despot, that he should persuade her to cooperate and get her to "sign." He is essentially an educator and thus runs the risk inherent in educational undertakings. In all Masoch's novels, the woman, although persuaded, is still basically doubting, as though she were afraid: she is forced to commit herself to a role to which she may prove inadequate, either by overplaying or by falling short of expectations. In *The Divorced Woman*, the heroine complains: "Julian's ideal was a cruel woman, a woman like Catherine the Great, but alas, I was cowardly and weak. . . ." In *Venus*, Wanda says: "I am afraid of not being capable of it, but for you, my beloved, I am willing to try." Or again: "Beware, I might grow to enjoy it."

The educational undertaking of Masoch's heroes, their submission to a woman, the torments they undergo, are so many steps in their climb toward the Ideal. *The Divorced Woman* is subtitled *The Cult of an Idealist*. Severin, the hero of *Venus*, takes as a motto for his doctrine of "supersensualism" the words of Mephistopheles to Faust: "Thou sensual, supersensual libertine, a little girl can lead thee by the nose." (*Überstänlich* in Goethe's text does not mean "supersensitive" but "supersensual," "supercarnal," in conformity with theological tradition, where *Sinnlichkeit* denotes the flesh, *sensualitas*). It is therefore not surprising that masochism should seek historical and cultural confirmation in mystical or idealistic initiation rites. The naked body of a woman can only be contemplated in a mystical frame of mind, as is the case in *Venus*. This fact is illustrated more clearly still in *The Divorced Woman*, where the hero, Julian, under the disturbing influence of a friend, desires for the first time to see his mistress naked. He begins by invoking a "need" to "observe," but finds that he is overcome by a religious feeling "without anything

sensual about it" (we have here the two basic stages of fetishism). The ascent from the human body to the work of art and from the work of art to the Idea must take place under the shadow of the whip. Masoch is animated by a dialectical spirit. In *Kenia* the story is set in motion by a dream that occurs during an interrupted reading of Hegel. But the primary influence is that of Plato. While Sade is spinozistic and employs demonstrative reason, Masoch is platonic and proceeds by dialectical imagination. One of Masoch's stories is entitled *The Love of Plato* and was at the origin of his adventure with Ludwig II.⁴ Masoch's relation to Plato is evidenced not only by the ascent to the realm of the intelligible, but by the whole technique of dialectical reversal, disguise and reduplication. In the adventure with Ludwig II Masoch does not know at first whether his correspondent is a man or a woman; he is not sure at the end whether he is one or two people, nor does he know during the episode what part his wife will play, but he is prepared for anything, a true dialectician who knows the opportune moment and seizes it. Plato showed that Socrates appeared to be the lover but that fundamentally he was the loved one. Likewise the masochistic hero appears to be educated and fashioned by the authoritarian woman whereas basically it is he who forms her, dresses her for the part and prompts the harsh words she addresses to him. It is the victim who speaks through the mouth of his torturer, without sparing himself. Dialectic does not simply mean the free interchange of discourse, but implies transpositions or displacements of this kind, resulting in a scene being enacted simultaneously on several levels with reversals and reduplications in the allocation of roles and discourse.

Pornological literature is aimed above all at confronting language with its own limits, with what is in a sense a "nonlanguage" (violence that does not speak, eroticism that remains unspoken). However this task can only be accomplished by an internal split-

ting of language: the imperative and descriptive function must transcend itself toward a higher function, the personal element turning by reflection upon itself into the impersonal. When Sade invokes a universal analytical Reason to explain that which is most particular in desire, we must not merely take this as evidence that he is a man of the eighteenth century; particularity and the corresponding delusion must also represent an Idea of pure reason. Similarly when Masoch invokes the dialectical spirit, the spirit of Mephistopheles and that of Plato in one, this must not merely be taken as proof of his romanticism; here too particularity is seen reflectively in the impersonal Ideal of the dialectical spirit. In Sade the imperative and descriptive function of language transcends itself toward a pure demonstrative, instituting function, and in Masoch toward a dialectical, mythical and persuasive function. These two transcendent functions essentially characterize the two perversions, they are twin ways in which the monstrous exhibits itself in reflection.

The Role of Descriptions

Since the transcendent function in Sade is demonstrative and in Masoch dialectical, the role and the significance of descriptions are very different in each case. Although Sade's descriptions are basically related to the function of demonstration, they are nevertheless relatively independent creations; they are obscene in themselves. Sade cannot do without this provocative element. The same cannot be said of Masoch, for while the greatest obscenity may undoubtedly be present in threats, advertisements or contracts, it is not a necessary condition. Indeed, the work of Masoch is on the whole commendable for its unusual decency. The most vigilant censor could hardly take exception to *Venus*, unless he were to question a certain atmosphere of suffocation and suspense which is a feature of all Masoch's novels. In many of his stories he has no difficulty in presenting masochistic fantasies as though they were instances of national custom and folklore, or the innocent games of children, or the frolics of a loving woman, or even the demands of morality and patriotism. Thus in the excitement of a banquet, the men, following an ancient custom, drink out of the women's shoes (*Sappho's Slipper*); young maidens ask their sweethearts to play at being bears or dogs, and harness them to little carts (*The Fisher of Souls*); a woman in love teasingly pretends

to use a document signed in blank by her lover (*The Blank Paper*). In a more serious vein, a woman patriot, in order to save her town, asks to be brought before the Turks, surrenders her husband to them as a slave and gives herself to the Pasha (*The Jodib of Bielopol*). Undoubtedly in all these cases the man derives from his humiliation a "secondary gain" which is specifically masochistic. Nevertheless, Masoch succeeds in presenting a great part of his work on a "reassuring" note and finds justification for masochistic behavior in the most varied motivations or in the demands of tateful and agonizing situations. (Sade, on the other hand, could fool nobody when he tried this method.) Consequently Masoch was not a condemned author but a fêted and honored one. Even the blatantly masochistic elements in his work gained acceptance as the expression of Slavonic folklore or of the spirit of Little Russia. He was known as the Turgenev of Little Russia: he could equally well have been compared to the Comtesse de Segur. Masoch did of course produce a somber counterpart to these works: *Venus*, *The Mother of God*, *The Fountain of Youth*, *The Hymn of the Poussa*, restore the original rigor and purity of the masochistic motivation. But whether the descriptions are rosy or somber, they always bear the stamp of decency. We never see the naked body of the woman torturer; it is always wrapped in furs. The body of the victim remains in a strange state of indeterminacy except where it receives the blows.

How can we account for these two kinds of "displacement" in Masoch's descriptions. We are led back to the question: why does the demonstrative function of language in Sade imply obscene descriptions, while Masoch's dialectical function seems to exclude them or at least not to treat them as essential elements?

Underlying the work of Sade is negation in its broadest and deepest sense. Here we must distinguish between two levels of negation: negation (the negative) as a partial process and pure

negation as a totalizing Idea. These two levels correspond to Sade's distinction between two *natures*, the importance of which was shown by Klossowski. Secondary nature is bound by its own rules and its own laws; it is pervaded by the negative, but not everything in it is negation. Destruction is merely the reverse of creation and change, disorder is another form of order, and the decomposition of death is equally the composition of life. The negative is all-pervasive, but the process of death and destruction that it represents is only a partial process. Hence the disappointment of the sadistic hero, faced with a nature which seems to prove to him that the perfect crime is impossible: "Yes, I abhor Nature." Even the thought that other people's pain gives him pleasure does not comfort him, for this ego-satisfaction mere y means that the negative can be achieved only as the reverse of positive. Individuation, no less than the preservation of a reign or a species are processes that testify to the narrow limits of secondary nature. In opposition to this we find the notion of primary nature and pure negation that override all reigns and all laws, free even from the necessity to create, preserve or individuate. Pure negation needs no foundation and is beyond all foundation, a primal delirium, an original and timeless chaos solely composed of wild and lacerating molecules. In the words of the Pope: "The criminal capable of overthrowing the three realms at once by annihilating them along with their productive capabilities, is the one who will have served Nature best." But in point of fact this original nature cannot be given: secondary nature alone makes up the world of experience, and negation is only ever given in the partial processes of the negative. Therefore original nature is necessarily the object of an Idea, and pure negation is a delusion: ou, it is a delusion of reason itself. Rationalism is not grafted onto the work of Sade; it is rather by an internal necessity that he evolves the idea of a delusion, an exorbitance specific to reason.

It is important to note that the distinction between the two natures corresponds to and is the foundation of the distinction between the two elements, the personal element which embodies the power of negativity and represents the way in which the sadistic ego still participates in secondary nature and reproduces its acts of violence, and the impersonal element which relates to primary nature and the delusional idea of negation, and represents the way in which the sadist negates secondary nature along with his own ego.

In *The One Hundred and Twenty Days of Sodom* the libertine states that he finds excitement not in "what is here," but in "what is not here," the absent Object, "the idea of evil." The idea of that which is not, the idea of the No or of negation which is not given and cannot be given in experience must necessarily be the object of a demonstration (in the sense that a mathematical truth holds good even when we are asleep and even if it does not exist in nature). Hence the rage and despair of the sadistic hero when he realizes how paltry his own crimes are in relation to the idea which he can only reach through the omnipotence of reasoning. He dreams of a universal, impersonal crime, or as Clairwill puts it, a crime "which is perpetually effective, even when I myself cease to be effective, so that there will not be a single moment of my life, even when I am asleep, when I shall not be the cause of some disturbance." The task of the libertine is to bridge the gap between the two elements, the element at his actual disposal and the element in his mind, the derivative and the original, the personal and the impersonal. The system expounded by Saint-Fond (where Sade develops most fully the idea of a pure defilement of reason) asks under what conditions "a particular pain, δ " produced in secondary nature would necessarily reiterate and reproduce itself *ad infinitum* in primary nature. This is the clue to the meaning of repetitiveness in Sade's writing and of the monotony

of sadism. In practice, however, the libertine is confined to illustrating his total demonstration with partial inductive processes borrowed from secondary nature. He cannot do more than accelerate and condense the motions of partial violence. He achieves the acceleration by multiplying the number of his victims and their sufferings. The condensation on the other hand implies that violence must not be dissipated under the sway of inspiration or impulse, or even be governed by the pleasures it might afford, since those pleasures would still bind him to secondary nature, but it must be exercised in cold blood, and condensed by the very

lack of the coldness of demonstrative reason. It is the well-known quality of the libertine, the self-control of the pornographer with which he contrasts his impetuous enthusiasms. He is the pornographer. Enthusiasm is precisely what he dislikes in Rousseau. He does not quite so far as to say that the pornographer (publicly) that he at least had not depicted vice as pleasant or gay but as apathetic. This apathy does of course produce intense pleasure, but ultimately it is not the pleasure of an ego participating in secondary nature (even of a criminal ego participating in a criminal nature), but on the contrary the pleasure of negating nature within the ego and outside the ego, and negating the ego itself. It is in short the pleasure of demonstrative reason.

If we consider the means available to the sadist for conducting his demonstration, it appears that the demonstrative function subordinates the descriptive function, accelerates and condenses it in a controlled manner, but cannot by any means dispense with it. The descriptions must be precise both qualitatively and quantitatively and must bear on two areas: cruel actions and disgusting actions, both of which are for the cold-blooded libertine equal sources of pleasure. In the words of the monk Clement in *Justine*: "You have been arrested by two irregularities you have noticed in us: you are astonished that some of our companions should be

pleasantly stimulated by matters commonly held to be fetid or impure, and you are similarly surprised that our voluptuous faculties can be powerfully excited by actions which, in your view, bear none but the emblem of ferocity. . . . In both cases it is through the intermediary of description and the accelerating and condensing effect of repetition that the demonstrative function achieves its strongest impact. Hence it would appear that the obscenity of the descriptions in Sade is grounded in his whole conception of the negative and of negation.

In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* Freud distinguished between the life instincts and the death instincts, Eros and Thanatos. But in order to understand this distinction we must make a further and more profound distinction between the death or destructive instincts and the Death Instinct. The former are actually given or exhibited in the unconscious, but always in combination with the life instincts; this combination of the death instincts with Eros is as it were the precondition of the "presentation" of Thanatos. So that destruction, and the negative at work in destruction, always manifests itself as the other face of construction and unification as governed by the pleasure principle. This is the sense in which Freud is able to state that we do not find a No (pure negation) in the unconscious, since all opposites coincide there. By contrast when we speak of the Death Instinct, we refer to Thanatos, the absolute negation. Thanatos as such cannot be given in psychic life, even in the unconscious. It is, as Freud pointed out in his admirable text, essentially silent. And yet we must speak of it for it is a determinable principle, the foundation and even more of psychic life. Everything depends on it, though as Freud points out, we can only speak of it in speculative or mythical terms.

The distinction between the death or destructive instincts and the Death Instinct seems in fact to correspond to Sade's distinc-

tion between the two natures or the two elements. The sadistic hero appears to have set himself the task of thinking out the Death Instinct (pure negation) in a demonstrative form, and is only able to achieve this by multiplying and condensing the activities of component negative or destructive instincts. But the question now arises whether there is not yet another "method" besides the speculative sadistic one.

Freud has analyzed forms of resistance which in various ways imply a process of disavowal (*Verneinung*, *Verwerfung*, *Verdrängung*; Lacan has shown the significance of each of these terms). It might seem that a disavowal is, generally speaking, much more superficial than a negation or even a partial destruction. But this is not so, for it represents an entirely different operation. Disavowal should perhaps be understood as the point of departure of an operation that consists neither in negating nor even destroying, but rather in radically contesting the validity of that which is. It suspends belief in and neutralizes the given in such a way that a new horizon opens up beyond the given and in place of it. The clearest example given by Freud is fetishism: the fetish is the image or substitute of the female phallus, that is the means by which we deny that the woman lacks a penis. The fetishist's choice of a fetish is determined by the last object he saw as a child before becoming aware of the missing penis (a shoe, for example, in the case of a glance directed from the feet upward). The constant return to this object, this point of departure, enables him to validate the existence of the organ that is in dispute. The fetish is therefore not a symbol at all, but as it were a frozen, arrested, two-dimensional image, a photograph to which one returns repeatedly to exorcise the dangerous consequences of movement, the harmful discoveries that result from exploration; it represents the last point at which it was still possible to believe . . . Thus it appears that fetishism is first of all a disavowal ("No, the woman does not

lack a penis"); secondly it is a defensive neutralization (since, contrary to what happens with negation, the knowledge of the situation as it is persists, but in a suspended, neutralized form); in the third place it is a protective and idealizing neutralization (for the belief in a female phallus is itself experienced as a protest of the ideal against the real; it remains suspended or neutralized in the ideal, the better to shield itself against the painful awareness of reality).

Fetishism, as defined by the process of disavowal and suspension of belief belongs essentially to masochism. Whether it also has a place in sadism is a very complex question. There is no doubt that many sadistic murders are accompanied by rituals, as when the victim's clothes are torn without any evidence of a struggle. But it is a mistake to think of the relation of the fetishist to the fetish in terms of sadomasochistic ambivalence; it leads too easily to the creation of a sadomasochistic entity. We should not confuse, as is so often done, two very different types of violence, a potential violence toward the fetish itself, and a violence which arises only in connection with the choice and constitution of the fetish (as in hair despoiling).⁵ In our opinion fetishism only occurs in sadism in a secondary and distorted sense. It is divested of its essential relation to disavowal and suspense and passes into the totally different context of negativity and negation, where it becomes an agent in the sadistic process of condensation.

On the other hand there can be no masochism without fetishism in the primary sense. The way in which Masoch defines his idealism or "supersensualism" seems at first sight rather trivial. Why believe in the idea of a perfect world? asks Masoch in *The Divorced Woman*. What we need to do is to "put on wings" and escape into the world of dreams. He does not believe in negating or destroying the world nor in idealizing it; what he does is to disavow and thus to suspend it, in order to secure an ideal

which is itself suspended in fantasy. He questions the validity of existing reality in order to create a pure ideal reality, an operation which is perfectly in line with the judicial spirit of masochism. It is not surprising that this process should lead straight into fetishism. The main objects of fetishism in Masoch's life and work are furs, shoes, the whip, the strange helmets that he liked to adorn women with, or the various disguises such as we find in *Kenia*. The scene mentioned earlier from *The Divorced Woman* illustrates the split that occurs in fetishism and the corresponding double "suspension": on the one hand the subject is aware of reality but suspends this awareness; on the other the subject clings to his ideal. There is a desire for scientific observation, and subsequently a state of mystical contemplation. The masochistic process of disavowal is so extensive that it affects sexual pleasure itself: pleasure is postponed for as long as possible and is thus disavowed. The masochist is therefore able to deny the reality of pleasure at the very point of experiencing it, in order to identify with the

In Masoch's novels, it is the moments of suspense that are the climactic moments. It is no exaggeration to say that Masoch was the first novelist to make use of suspense as an essential ingredient of romantic fiction. This is partly because the masochistic rites of torture and suffering imply actual physical suspension (the hero is hung up, crucified or suspended), but also because the woman torturer freezes into postures that identify her with a statue, a painting or a photograph. She suspends her gestures in the act of bringing down a veil, or in retracing her lips; her movement is arrested as she turns to look at herself in a mirror. As we shall see, these "photographic" scenes, these reflected and arrested images are of the greatest significance both from the general point of view of masochism and from the particular point of view of the art of Masoch. They are one of his creative contribu-

tions to the novel. The same scenes are reenacted at various levels in a sort of frozen progression. Thus in *Venus* the key scene of the woman torturer is imagined, staged and enacted in earnest, the roles shifting from one character to another. The aesthetic and dramatic suspense of Masoch contrasts with the mechanical, cumulative repetition of Sade. We should note here that the art of suspense always places us on the side of the victim and forces us to identify with him, whereas the gathering momentum of repetition tends to force us onto the side of the torturer and make us identify with the sadistic hero. Repetition does occur in masochism, but it is totally different from sadistic repetition: in Sade it is a function of acceleration and condensation and in Masoch it is characterized by the "frozen" quality and the suspense.

We are now in a position to account for the absence of obscene content in the work of Masoch. The function of the *leer* is kept only subsists, but any potential obscenity is disavowed or suspended by separating the *leer* from the other from which it arises, or the *leer* from the other part of the subject to another part, or again from one aspect of the subject to another. What remains is a charge and oppress of an atmosphere, like a sex, performing permeating the suspense and resisting all displacements. Of Masoch it can be said, as it cannot be of Sade, that no one has ever been so far with so little offense to decency. This leads us to another aspect of Masoch's art: he is a master of the atmospheric novel and the art of suggestion. The settings in Sade, the castles inhabited by his heroes are subject to the brutal laws of darkness and light that accelerate the gestures of their cruel occupants. The settings in Masoch, with their heavy tapestries, their cluttered intimacy, their boudoirs and closets, create a chiaroscuro where the only things that emerge are suspended gestures and suspended suffering. Both in their art and in their language Masoch and Sade are totally different. Let us try to summarize the differences so

far in the work of Sade, imperatives and descriptions transcend themselves toward the higher function of demonstration: the demonstrative function is based on universal negativity as an active process, and on universal negation as an Idea of pure reason; it operates by conserving and accelerating the descriptions which are overlaid with obscenity. In the work of Masoch, imperatives and descriptions also achieve a transcendent function, but it is of a mythical and dialectical order. It rests on universal disavowal as a reactive process and on universal suspension as an Idea of pure imagination; the descriptions remain, but they are displaced or frozen, suggestive but free from obscenity. The fundamental distinction between sadism and masochism can be summarized in the contrasting processes of the negative and negation on the one hand, and of disavowal and suspense on the other. The first represents a speculative and analytical manner of apprehending the Death Instinct — which, as we have seen, can never be given — while the second pursues the same object in a totally different way, mythically, dialectically and in the imaginary.

Are Sade and Masoch Complementary?

With Sade and Masoch the function of literature is not to describe the world, since this has already been done, but to define a counterpart of the world capable of containing its violence and excesses. It has been said that an excess of stimulation is in a sense erotic.²⁷ Thus eroticism is able to act as a mirror to the world by reflecting its excesses, drawing out its violence and even conferring a "spiritual" quality on these phenomena by the very fact that it puts them at the service of the senses. (Sade, in *Philosophy in the Bedroom*, distinguishes between two kinds of wickedness, the one dull-witted and commonplace, the other purified, self-conscious and because it is sensualized, "intelligent.") Similarly the words of this literature create a counter-language which has a direct impact on the senses. It is as though Sade were holding up a perverse mirror in which the whole course of nature and history were reflected, from the beginning of time to the Revolution of 1789. In the isolation of their remote chateaux, Sade's heroes claim to reconstruct the world and rewrite the "history of the heart." They muster the forces of nature and tradition, from everywhere — Africa, Asia, the ancient world — to arrive at their tangible reality and the pure sensual principle underlying them. Ironically, they even strive toward a "republicanism" of which the French are not yet capable.

In Masoch we find the same ambition, to hold up a perverse mirror to all nature and all mankind, from the origins of history to the 1848 revolutions of the Austrian Empire — "The history of cruelty in love." For Masoch, the minorities of the Austrian Empire are an inexhaustible source of stories and customs (hence the Galician, Hungarian, Polish, Jewish and Prussian tales that form the main part of his work). Under the general title *The Heritage of Cain*, Masoch conceived of a "universal" work, the natural history of humanity in a cycle of stories with six main themes: love, property, money, the State, war and death. Each of these forces was to be restored to its cruel physical immediacy under the sign of Cain, in the mirror of Cain, he was to show how monarchs, generals and diplomats deserved to be thrown in jail and executed along with murderers.⁴ Masoch liked to imagine that the Slavs were in need of a beautiful female despot, a terrible Tsarina, to ensure the triumph of the revolutions of 1848 and to strengthen the Pan-Slavic movement: "A further effort, Slavs, if you would become Republicans."

To what extent can we regard Sade and Masoch as accomplices or complementary forces? The sadomasochistic entity was not invented by Freud; we find it in the work of Krafft-Ebing, Havelock Ellis and Feré. The strange relationship between pleasure in doing and pleasure in suffering evil has always been sensed by doctors and writers who have recorded man's intimate life. The "meeting" of sadism and masochism, the affinity that exists between them, is apparent in the work of both Sade and Masoch. There is a certain masochism in Sade's characters, in *The One Hundred and Twenty Days of Sodom* we are told of the tortures and humiliations which the libertines deliberately undergo. The sadist enjoys being whipped as much as he enjoys whipping others. Saint-Fond in *Juliette* arranges for a gang of men to assail him with whips. La Borghése cries: "I would wish that my aberrations lead

me like the lowest of creatures to the fate which befits their wantonness: for me the scaffold would be a throne of exquisite bliss." Conversely, there is a certain sadism in masochism: at the end of his ordeals, Severin, the hero of *Venus in Furs*, declares himself cured and turns to whipping and torturing women. He sees himself no longer as the "anvil" but as the "hammer."

However, it is remarkable that in both instances the reversal should only occur at the end of the enterprise. Severin's sadism is a culmination; it is as though expiation and the satisfaction of the need to expiate were at last to permit the hero what his punishments were previously intended to deny him. Once they have been undergone, punishments and suffering allow the exercise of the evil they once prohibited. Likewise the "masochism" of the sadistic hero makes its appearance at the outcome of his sadistic exercises: it is their climax, the crowning sanction of their glorious infamy. The libertine is not afraid of being treated in the way he treats others. The pain he suffers is an ultimate pleasure, not because it satisfies a need to expiate or a feeling of guilt, but because it confirms him in his inalienable power and gives him a supreme certitude. Through insults and humiliations, in the throes of pain, the libertine is not expiating, but in Sade's words, "he rejoices in his inner heart that he has gone far enough to deserve such treatment." This kind of paroxysm in Sade's heroes is highly significant, for it means, as Maurice Blanchot points out that "in spite of the similarity of the descriptions, it seems fair to grant the paternity of masochism to Sacher-Masoch and that of sadism to Sade. Pleasure in humiliation never detracts from the mastery of Sade's heroes; debasement exalts them, emotions such as shame, remorse or the desire for punishment are quite unknown to them."⁷

It would therefore be difficult to say that sadism turns into masochism and vice versa; what we have in each case is a para-

doxical by-product, a kind of sadism being the humorous outcome of masochism and a kind of masochism the ironic outcome of sadism. But it is very doubtful whether the masochist's sadism is the same as Sade's, or the sadist's masochism the same as Masoch's. The masochist is able to change into a sadist by expiating, the sadist into a masochist on condition that he does not expiate. If its existence is too hastily taken for granted the sadomasochistic entity is liable to become a crude syndrome that fails to satisfy the demands of genuine symptomatology. It rather falls into the category of disturbances mentioned earlier which are coherent in appearance only and which must be broken down into discrete clinical entities. We should not deal with the problem of symptoms too lightly. It is sometimes necessary to start again from scratch and to break up a syndrome that blurs and arbitrarily unites radically dissimilar symptoms. Hence our suggestion that Masoch was perhaps an even greater clinician than Sade, in that he provided various elucidations and intuitions which help to break down the spurious sadomasochistic unity.

The belief in this unity is to a large extent the result of misunderstandings and careless reasoning. It may seem obvious that the sadist and the masochist are destined to meet. The fact that the one enjoys inflicting while the other enjoys suffering pain seems to be such striking proof of their complementarity that it would be disappointing if the encounter did not take place. A popular joke tells of the meeting between a sadist and a masochist; the masochist says: "Hurt me." The sadist replies: "No." This is a particularly stupid joke, not only because it is unrealistic but because it foolishly claims competence to pass judgment on the world of perversions. It is unrealistic because a genuine sadist could never tolerate a masochistic victim (one of the monks' victims in *Justine* explains: "They wish to be certain their crimes cost tears; they would send away any girl who was to come here vol-

untarily.") Neither would the masochist tolerate a truly sadistic torturer. He does of course require a special "nature" in the woman torturer, but he needs to mold this nature, to educate and persuade it in accordance with his secret project, which could never be fulfilled with a sadistic woman. Wanda Sacher-Masoch should not have been surprised that Sacher-Masoch failed to respond to one of their sadistic woman friends; conversely, the critics were wrong in suspecting Wanda of lying because she presented a vaguely innocent image of herself, however cunningly and clumsily. Sadistic characters do of course play a part in the masochistic situation as a whole, and the novels of Masoch, as we shall see, offer many examples of this. But their role is never a direct one, and it becomes significant only in the context of the situation that exists before their appearance. The female torturer regards with suspicion the sadist who proposes to help her, as though she sensed the incompatibility of their respective aims. In *The Fisher of Souls*, the heroine Dragomira expresses this feeling to the cruel count Boguslav Soltyk, who believes she is sadistic and cruel: "You make people suffer out of cruelty, but I castigate and kill in the name of God, without pity, but also without hatred."

We tend to ignore this obvious difference. The woman torturer of masochism cannot be sadistic precisely because she is in the masochistic situation, she is an integral part of it, a realization of the masochistic fantasy. She belongs in the masochistic world, not in the sense that she has the same tastes as her victim, but because her "sadism" is of a kind never found in the sadist; it is as it were the double or the reflection of masochism. The same is true of sadism. The victim cannot be masochistic not merely because the libertine would be wrecked if she were to experience pleasure, but because the victim of the sadist belongs entirely in the world of sadism and is an integral part of the sacri-

tic situation. In some strange way she is the counterpart of the sadistic torturer (in Sade's two great novels which are like the reflections of each other, Juliette and Justine, the depraved and the virtuous girl), are sisters). Sadism and masochism are confused when they are treated like abstract entities each in isolation from its specific universe. Once they have been cut off from their Umwelt and stripped of their flesh and blood, it seems natural that they should fit in with each other.

This is not to say that the victim of the sadist is herself sadistic, nor that the torturer of masochism is masochistic. But equally unacceptable is Krafft-Ebing's view according to which the torturer of Masoch is either a true sadist or else pretends to be one, in our opinion the woman torturer belongs entirely to masochism: admittedly she is not a masochistic character, but she is a pure element of masochism. By distinguishing in a perversion between the subject (the person) and the element (the essence), we are able to understand how a person can elude his subjective destiny, but only with partial success, by playing the role of an element in the situation of his choice. The tortress escapes from her own masochism by assuming the active role in the masochistic situation. It is a mistake to think that she is sadistic or even pretending to be so. We must not imagine that it is a matter of the masochist encountering a sadist by a stroke of luck. Each subject in the perversion only needs the "element" of the same perversion and not a subject of the other perversion. Whenever the type of the woman torturer is observed in the masochistic setting, it becomes obvious that she is neither a genuine sadist nor a pseudosadist but something quite different. She does indeed belong essentially to masochism, but without realizing it as a subject: she incarnates instead the element of "inflicting pain" in an exclusively masochistic situation. Masoch and his heroes are constantly in search of a peculiar and extremely rare feminine

"nature." The subject in masochism needs a certain "essence" of masochism embodied in the nature of a woman who renounces her own subjective masochism; he definitely has no need of another subject, i.e., the sadistic subject.

Admittedly the term sadomasochism does not merely imply the external event of two persons meeting. Nevertheless the theme of an encounter often persists, if only in the form of a "witticism" floating in the unconscious. When Freud took up and reformulated the question of sadomasochism, he started with the consideration that sadomasochism is not a perversion of one or some individual, involving opposite instincts and drives. "A person who feels pleasure in producing pain in someone else in a sexual relationship is also capable of enjoying as pleasure any pain which he may himself derive from sexual relations. A sadist is always at the same time a masochist, although the active or the passive aspect of the perversion may be the more strongly developed in him and may represent his predominant sexual activity." His second consideration is that there is an identity of experience: the sadist, qua sadist, is only able to feel pleasure in inflicting pain because he has experienced in the past a link between his own pleasure and the pain he has suffered. This argument is all the more curious in that it is stated in the light of Freud's first thesis, where sadism is made to precede masochism. But Freud distinguishes two types of sadism: the first is purely aggressive and only aims at domination; the second is hedonistic and aims at producing pain in others. The masochistic experience of a link between one's own pleasure and one's own pain parallels between these two forms of sadism. It would never occur to the sadist to find pleasure in other people's pain if he had not himself first undergone the masochistic experience of a link between pain and pleasure.⁹ Thus Freud's first model is more complex than it seems, and suggests the following sequence: aggressive sadism — turning around

of sadism upon the self — masochistic experience — hedonistic sadism (by projection and regression). Note that the consideration of an identity of experience is invoked by Sade's libertines, who thus contribute to the idea of a sadomasochistic entity. Nonceuil explains that the libertine's experience of his own pain is related to a stimulation of his "nervous fluid"; it is therefore scarcely surprising that a man thus endowed should "imagine that he moves the object of his pleasure by the same means that affect him."

The third argument is concerned with *transformations*: it consists in showing that the sexual instincts are liable to merge into one another or to transform themselves directly with respect both to their aims and to their objects (reversal into the opposite, turning around upon the self). Again this argument is curious since Freud's attitude toward theories of transformation is extremely reserved. On the one hand he does not believe in an evolutionary tendency, on the other, the dualism which he always maintained in his theory of the instincts places a definite limitation on the possibility of transformations, since according to this theory they can never occur between one group of instincts and another. Thus, in *The Ego and the Id*, Freud explicitly rejects the hypothesis of a direct transformation of love into hate and vice versa, owing to the fact that these agencies depend on qualitatively differentiated instincts (Eros and Thanatos). In fact Freud shows a much greater affinity with Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire than with Darwin. When Freud says that we do not become perverse but simply fail to outgrow the perverse stage of infancy, he uses a formula which comes very close indeed to that used by Geoffroy in connection with freaks. The key concepts of fixation and regression are in direct line of descent from Geoffroy's tetatology (arrested development and retrogradation). Geoffroy's point of view excludes all evolution by direct transformation: there is only

a hierarchy of possible types and forms, and development within this hierarchy stops at a more or less early stage, or "retrogradation" sets in more or less severely. We find the same conception in Freud: the various combinations of the two types of instincts make up a whole hierarchy of forms at which the individual may become fixated or to which he may regress. It is all the more remarkable that in his treatment of perversions Freud seems to admit of a polymorphous system with possibilities of evolution and direct transformation, which he regards as unacceptable in the field of neurotic and cultural formations.

Therefore if we are to view the concept of a sadomasochistic entity in the light of Freud's arguments we are faced with a problem. Even the notion of a component instinct is a dangerous one in this context since it tends to make us ignore the specificity of types of sexual behavior. We tend to forget that all the available energy of the subject becomes mobilized at the service of his particular perversion. The sadist and the masochist might well be enacting separate dramas, each complete in itself, with different sets of characters and no possibility of communication between them, either from inside or from outside. Only the normal "communicate" — more or less. In the sphere of perversions, it is a mistake to confuse the formations, the concrete and specific manifestations, with an abstract "grid," as though a common libidinal substance flowed now into one form, now into another. We are told that some individuals experienced pleasure both in inflicting pain and in suffering it. We are told furthermore that the person who enjoys inflicting pain experiences in his innermost being the link that exists between the pleasure and the pain. But the question is whether these "facts" are not mere abstractions, whether the pleasure-pain link is being abstracted from the concrete formal conditions in which it arises. The pleasure-pain complex is regarded as a sort of neutral substance common to both sadism

and masochism. The link is even further specified by being ascribed to a particular subject, and it is supposed to be experienced equally and identically by the sadistic and the masochistic subject, regardless of the concrete forms *from which it results* in each case. To assume that there is an underlying common "substance" which explains in advance all evolutions and transformations is surely to proceed by abstraction. Even though the sadist may definitely enjoy being hurt, it does not follow that he enjoys it in the same way as the masochist; likewise the masochist's pleasure in inflicting pain is not necessarily the same as the sadist's. We are inevitably led back to the problem of syndromes: some syndromes merely attach a common label to irreducibly different disturbances. Biology warns us against over-hasty acceptance of the existence of an uninterrupted evolutionary chain. The fact that two organs are analogous need not mean that there is an evolutionary link between them. We should avoid falling into "evolutionism" by aligning in a single chain results which are approximately continuous but which imply irreducible and heterogeneous formations. An eye, for example, could be produced in several independent ways, as the outcome of different sequences, the analogous product of completely different mechanisms. I suggest that this is also true of sadism and masochism and of the pleasure-pain complex as their allegedly common organ. The concurrence of sadism and masochism is fundamental but analogous: their price sets and their formations are entirely different; their common organ, their "eye," squints and she is therefore make us suspicious.

CHAPTER IV

The Three Women in Masoch

The heroines of Masoch have in common a well-developed and muscular figure, a proud nature, an imperious will and a cruel disposition even in their moments of tenderness and naïveté. The oriental courtesan, the awe-inspiring Tsarina, the Hungarian or the Polish revolutionary, the servant-mistress, the Sarmatian peasant girl, the cold mystic, the genteel girl, all share these basic traits: "Whether she is a princess or a peasant girl, whether she is clad in ermine or sheepskin, she is always the same woman: she wears furs, she wields a whip, she treats men as slaves and she is both my creation and the true Sarmatian Woman."¹⁰ But beneath this apparent uniformity we may distinguish three very different types of women.

The first type is that of the Grecian woman, the pagan, hetaira or Aphrodite, the generator of disorder. Her die, in her own words, is dedicated to love and beauty; she lives for the moment. She is sensual, she loves whoever attracts her and gives herself accordingly. She believes in the independence of woman and in the fleeting nature of love; for her the sexes are equal — she is hermaphrodite. But it is Aphrodite, the female principal, that triumphs — as Omphale unmans Hercules with woman's attire. She conceives equality merely as the critical moment at which she

In *Venus* the adventure begins with the theme of the hetaira and ends with the sadistic theme; yet the essential part of the story is enacted in between these two extremes, in another element. The two themes do not represent the masochistic ideal but rather the end points between which this ideal swings, like the span of the pendulum. At one extreme masochism has yet to come into operation, and at the other it has already lost its *raison d'être*. The character of the woman torturer regards these outer limits with a mixture of fear, revulsion and attraction, since she never quite knows whether she will be able to maintain her prescribed role, and fears that she might at any moment fall back into primitive hetairism or forward into the other extreme of sadism. Anna, in *The Divorced Woman*, declares that she is too weak, too capricious — the capriciousness of the hetaira — to incarnate Julian's ideal. In *Venus*, Wanda only becomes sadistic because she can no longer maintain the role that Severin has imposed on her ("It was you who stifled my feelings with your romantic devotion and insane passion").

What is the essential masochistic element, the scene between the two boundaries where the crucial action takes place? What is the intermediate feminine type between the hetaira and the sadist? Only by piecing together the various descriptions of her in Masoch's writings can we hope to arrive at this fantastic character, this fantasy. In a "conte noir," *The Aesthetics of Ugliness*, he describes the mother of the family: "an imposing woman, with an air of severity, pronounced features and cold eyes, who nevertheless cherishes her little brood." Marticha is described as being "like an Indian woman or a Tartar from the Mongolian desert" — she has "the tender heart of a dove together with the cruel instincts of the feline race." Lola likes to torture animals and dreams of witnessing or even taking part in executions, but "in spite of her peculiar tastes, the girl was neither brutal nor eccentric: on the

contrary, she was reasonable and kind, and showed all the tenderness and delicacy of a sentimental nature" in *The Mother of God* Mardona is gentle and gay, and yet she is stern, cold and a master torturer: "Her lovely face was flushed with anger but her large blue eyes shone with a gentle light." Nena Baranoff is a haughty nurse with a heart of stone, but she becomes the tender fiancée of a dying man, and eventually meets her own death in the snow. In *Moonlight* we finally come upon the secret of Nature: Nature herself is cold, maternal and severe. The trinity of the masochistic dream is summed up in the words: cold — maternal — severe, icy — sentimental — cruel. These qualities point to the difference between the woman torturer and her "counterparts," the hetaira and the sadist, their sensuality is replaced by her supersensuous sentimentality, their warmth and their fire by her icy coldness, their confusion by her rigorous order.

The sadistic hero, just as much as the feminine idea of Masoch, professes an essential coldness which Sade calls "apathy." But one of our main problems is precisely to ascertain whether, with respect to cruelty, the apathy of the sadist is not completely different from the coldness of the ideal masochistic type. There is once more a danger of merely reinforcing the sadomasochistic abstraction by equating what are in fact two very different kinds of coldness. The "apathy" of the sadist is essentially directed against feeling: all feelings, even and especially that of doing evil, are condemned on the grounds that they bring about a dangerous dissipation which prevents the condensation of energy and its precipitation into the pure element of impersonal and demonstrative sensuality. "Try to turn into pleasure all things that alarm your heart." All enthusiasm, even and especially the enthusiasm for evil, is condemned because it enchains us to secondary nature and is still a residue of goodness within us. In the novels of Sade, the true libertines mistrust those characters who are still subject

to emotional outbursts, and who show that, even in the midst of evil and for evil's sake, they are liable to be "converted to the first misfortune." The coldness of the masochistic ideal has a quite different meaning: it is not the negation of feeling but rather the disavowal of sensuality. It is as if sentimentality assumed in this instance the superior role of the impersonal element, while sensuality held us prisoner of the particularities and imperfections of secondary nature. The function of the masochistic ideal is to ensure the triumph of ice-cold sentimentality by dint of coldness; the coldness is used here, as it were, to suppress pagan sensuality and keep sadistic sensuality at bay. Sensuality is disavowed, and no longer exists in its own right; thus Masoch can announce the birth of the new man "devoid of sexual love." Masochistic coldness represents the freezing point, the point of dialectical transmutation, a divine latency corresponding to the catastrophe of the Ice Age. But under the cold remains a supersensual sentimentality buried under the ice and protected by fur; this sentimentality radiates in turn through the ice as the generative principle of new order, a specific wrath and a specific cruelty. The coldness is both protective milieu and medium, cocoon and vehicle: it protects supersensual sentimentality as inner life, and expresses it as external order as wrath and severity.

Masoch was acquainted with the work of his contemporary Bachofen, an eminent ethnologist and Hegelian jurist. Is not Bachofen, as much as Hegel, the inspiration behind the dream at the beginning of *Venus*? Bachofen distinguished three eras in the evolution of humanity. The first is the hetæric or Aphroditic era, born in the lustful chaos of primeval swamps; woman's relations with man were many and fickle, the feminine principle was dominant and the father was "Nobody" (this phase, typified by the ruling courtesans of Asia, has survived in such institutions as temple prostitution). The second, or Demetrian era, dawned

among the Amazons and established a strict gynocratic and agricultural order; the swamps were drained; the father or husband now acquired a certain status but he still remained under the domination of the woman. Finally the patriarchal or Apollonian system established itself, matriarchy surviving in degenerate Amazonian or even Dionysian forms.¹¹ Masoch's three feminine types can easily be recognized in these three stages, the first and third eras being the limits between which the second oscillates in its precarious splendor and perfection. Here the fantasy finds what it needs, namely a theoretical and ideological structure which transforms it into a general conception of human nature and of the world. Talking about the art of the novel, Masoch remarked that we must proceed from the "schema" to the "problem"; from our starting point in the obsessive fantasy we must progress to the theoretical framework where the problem arises.¹²

How does the Greek idea become transformed into the masochistic ideal, the chaotic sensuality of the hetæric era into the new order of gynocratic sentimentality? Obviously through the catastrophe of the glacial epoch, which accounts for both the repression of sensuality and the triumphant rise of severity.

In the masochistic fantasy, fur retains its utilitarian function; it is worn less for the sake of modesty than from fear of catching cold. "Venus must hide herself in a vast fur lest she catch cold in our abstract northern clime, in the icy realm of Christianity." Masoch's heroines frequently sneeze. Everything is suggestive of coldness: marble body, women of stone, Venus of ice, are favorite expressions of Masoch; his characters often serve their amorous apprenticeship with a cold statue, by the light of the moon. The woman in the dream, at the beginning of *Venus*, expresses in her speech a romantic nostalgia for the lost world of the Greeks: "You cannot begin to appreciate love as pure bliss and divine serenity you modern men, you children of reason . . . as soon as you try to

be natural you become vulgar. Stay in your northern mists and Christian incense. . . You do not need the gods — they would freeze to death in your climate." That is indeed the essence of the matter: the catastrophe of the Ice Age having engulfed the world of the Greeks and with it the type of the Grecian woman, both sexes found themselves impoverished. Man became coarse and sought a new dignity in the development of consciousness and thought, as a reaction to man's heightened consciousness woman developed sentimentality, and toward his coarseness, severity. The glacial cold was wholly responsible for the transformation: sentimentality became the object of man's thought, and cruelty the punishment for his coarseness. In the coldhearted alliance between man and woman, it is this cruelty and sentimentality in woman that compel man to thought and properly constitute the masochistic ideal.

Like Sade, Masoch distinguishes two natures, but he characterizes them differently. Coarse nature is ruled by individual arbitrariness — cunning and violence, hatred and destruction, disorder and sensuality are everywhere at work. Beyond this lies the great primary nature, which is impersonal and self-conscious, sentimental and supersensual. In the prologue to Masoch's *Galvian Tales* a character known as "the wanderer" indicts Nature for being evil. Nature replies in her own defense that she is not hostile and does not hate us, even when she deals death, but always turns to us a threefold face — cold, maternal, severe. . . . Nature is the steppe. Masoch's descriptions of the steppe are of great beauty, especially the one that appears at the beginning of *Frisko Solobom*: the representation of nature by the identical images of the steppe, the sea and the mother aims to convey the idea that the steppe buries the Greek world of sensuality and rejects at the same time the modern world of sadism. It is like a cooling force which transforms desire and transmutes cruelty. This is the messianic ideal.

ism of the steppe. It does not follow that the cruelty of the masochistic ideal is any the lesser than primitive or sadistic cruelty, than the cruelty of whims or that of wickedness. Although masochism always has a theatrical quality that is not to be found in sadism, the sufferings it depicts are not, for all that, simulated or slight, neither is the ambient cruelty less great (the stories of Masoch record excruciating tortures). What characterizes masochism and its theatricality is a peculiar form of cruelty in the woman torturer: the cruelty of the Ideal, the specific freezing point, the point at which idealism is realized.

Masoch's three women correspond to three fundamental mother images: the first is the primitive, uterine, hetaeric mother, mother of the cloaca and the swamps; the second is the Oedipal mother, the image of the beloved, who becomes linked with the sadistic father as victim or as accomplice; and in between these two, the oral mother, mother of the steppe, who nurtures and brings death. We call her Intermediate, but she may also come last of all, for she is both oral and silent and therefore has the last word. Freud saw her thus in *The Theme of the Three Caskets*, an agreement with many themes from mythology and folklore. "The mother herself, the beloved who is chosen after her pattern, and finally the Mother Earth who receives him again — the third of the caskets alone, the silent goddess of Death, will take him into her arms." Her true place, however, is between the two others. Although she is displaced by an inevitable illusion of perspective. In this connection we feel that Bergler's general thesis is entirely sound: the specific element of masochism is the oral mother,¹⁵ the ideal of coldness, solicitude and death, between the uterine mother and the Oedipal mother. We must wonder all the more why so many psychoanalysts insist on discovering a disguised father-image in the masochistic ideal, and on detecting the presence of the father behind the woman torturer.

Father and Mother

It is argued that the overtness of the masochist's conflict with the mother, his readiness to incriminate her, should convince us that it is not the mother but the father who plays the contra role. But this is to assume that all resistances spring from repression; and in any case the masochist's alleged resistance might just as easily take the form of a displacement from one mother figure to another. It is not enough either to point to the muscular build and the furs of the torturer as evidence of a composite image. The "father" hypothesis stands in need of serious phenomenological or symptomatological support and cannot be made to rest on a line of reasoning which already presupposes an etiology, and with it the fallacious concept of a sadomasochistic entity. It is assumed that since the father-image is a determinant in sadism, this must also be true for masochism: the same factors operating in both cases. Once one allows for the inversions, projections and blurring characteristic of masochism. From this viewpoint the masochist would start by wishing to take the place of the father and steal his potency (the sadistic stage); a feeling of guilt would then arise, and with it the fear of castration, leading him to renounce the active aim and take the place of the mother in soliciting the father's love. But in order to avoid the new onset of guilt and castration fear to which the

passive role gives rise, he would now replace the desire to be loved by the father with the "desire to be beaten," which not only represents a lesser form of punishment, but is a substitute for the love relationship itself. But why is it the mother who does the beating and not, as we should expect, the father? We are given various reasons for this: first the need to avoid a choice which is too blatantly homosexual; second the need to preserve the first stage where the mother was the desired object, and graft onto it the punishing action of the father; finally the need to present the whole process as a kind of demonstration or plea addressed solely to the father: "You see, it is not I who wanted to take your place, it is she who hurts, castrates and beats me."

If the father appears to play the decisive role throughout these successive stages, it is because masochism is treated as a combination of highly abstract elements subject to various transformations. There is a failure to appreciate the total concrete situation, the specific world of the perversions: we are not given a genuinely differential diagnosis because the symptoms themselves have been obscured by a preconceived etiology. Even such notions as castration and guilt lose their explanatory force when they are used to show that situations that are fundamentally unrelated nevertheless reverse into one another and are thus related after all. Modes of equivalence and translation are mistaken for systems of transition and transformation. Even a psychoanalyst of Reich's insight can say: "Whenever we had the opportunity to study a case we found the father or his representative hidden behind the figure of the beating woman." In making such a statement we need to be far more specific about the meaning of "hidden," and to explain under what conditions someone or something can be said to be hidden in the relation between symptoms and causes. The same author adds: "After having considered, tested,

and put all this in the balance, there yet remains a doubt — does not the oldest stratum of masochism as phantasy and action regress after all to the mother-child relationship as to a historical reality?" And yet he upholds what he calls his "impression" concerning the essential and constant role of the father.¹⁴ Is it speaking about symptoms or offering an etiology based on combinations of abstractions? We are again faced with the question whether the belief in the determinant role of the father in masochism is not simply the result of the preconceived notion of a sadomasochistic entity.

The paternal and patriarchal theme undoubtedly predominates in sadism. There are many heroines in Sade's novels, but their actions — the pleasures they enjoy together and their common projects are all in imitation of man; man is the spectator and presiding genius to whom all their activities are dedicated. Sade's androgenous creations are the product of an incestuous union of father and daughter. Although parricide occurs as frequently as matricide in the work of Sade, the two forms of crime are far from equivalent. Sade equates the mother with secondary nature, which is composed of "soft" molecules and is subject to the laws of creation, conservation and reproduction — the father by contrast only belongs to this nature through social conservatism. Intrinsically he represents primary nature, which is beyond all constituted order and is made up of wild and lacerating molecules that carry disorder and anarchy: *pater sive Natura prima*. Therefore the father is murdered only insofar as he departs from his true nature and function, while the mother is murdered because she remains faithful to hers. As Klossowski has shown with the greatest insight, the sadistic fantasy ultimately rests on the theme of the father destroying his own family, by inciting the daughter to torture and murder the mother.¹⁵ In sadism the Oedipal image of woman is made, as it were, to explode: the mother

becomes the victim *par excellence*, while the daughter is elevated to the position of incestuous accomplice. For since the institution of the family and even the law are affected by the maternal character of secondary nature, the father can only be a father by overriding the law, by dissolving the family and prostituting its members. The father represents nature as a primitive anarchic force that can only be restored to its original state by destroying the laws and the secondary beings that are subject to them. The ultimate aim of the sadist is to put an effective end to all procreation since it competes with primary nature. What makes Sade's heroines sadistic is their sodomitic union with the father in a fundamental alliance against the mother. Sadism is in every sense an active negation of the mother and an exaltation of the father who is beyond all laws.

In "The Passing of the Oedipus Complex," Freud points to two possible outcomes: the active-sadistic, where the child identifies with the father, and the passive-masochistic, where he takes instead the place of the mother and desires to be loved by the father. The theory of partial impulses allows for the coexistence of these two entities and thus lends support to the belief in the unity of sadism and masochism. Freud says of the Wolf Man: "In his sadism he maintained his ancient identification with his father; but in his masochism he chose him as a sexual object." So when we are told that the character who does the beating in masochism is the father, we are entitled to ask: Who in reality is being beaten? Where is the father hidden? Could it not be in the person who is being beaten? The masochist feels guilty, he asks to be beaten, he expiates, but why and for what crime? Is it not precisely the father-image in him that is thus minoritized, beaten, ridiculed and humiliated? What the subject atones for is his resemblance to the father and the father's likeness in him: the formula of masochism is the humiliated father. Hence the father is not so much

the beater as the beaten. A point of great significance in the fantasy of the three mothers is the symbolic transfer or redistribution of all paternal functions to the threefold feminine figure: the father is excluded and completely nullified. Most of Masoch's novels contain a hunting scene which is described in minute detail: the ideal woman hunts a bear or a wolf and despoils it of its fur. We could interpret this symbolically as the struggle of woman against man, from which woman emerges triumphant. But this would be a mistake, since woman has already triumphed when masochism begins, the bear and the fur have already been invested with an exclusively feminine significance. The animal stands for the primitive heretic mother, the pre-birth mother, it is hunted and despoiled for the benefit of the oral mother, with the aim of achieving a rebirth, a parthenogenetic second birth in which, as we shall see, the father has no part. It is true that man reappears at the opposite pole, on the side of the Oedipal mother: an alliance is contracted between the third woman and the sadistic man (Elizabeth and Isokkar in *The Fountain of Youth*, Dragomira and Boguslav in *The Fisher of Souls*, and Wanda and the Greek in *Venus*). But this reappearance of man is compatible with masochism only to the extent that the Oedipal mother maintains her rights and her integrity: not only does the man appear in effeminate, transvestite form (the Greek in *Venus*), but in contrast to what happens in sadism, the mother-representative is the accomplice and the young girl is the victim. (In *The Fountain of Youth*, the masochistic hero allows Elizabeth to murder Gisele, the young girl he loves.) Where the sadistic man happens to triumph, as he does at the end of *Leviathan*, all masochistic activity ceases, like the forms in Plato, it withdraws or perishes rather than unite with its opposite, sadism.

However, the transfer of the functions of the father onto the three mother-images is only one aspect of the fantasy. The main

significance of the fantasy lies in the concentration of all the maternal functions in the person of the second mother, the oral or "good" mother. It is a mistake to relate masochism to the theme of the bad mother. There are of course bad mothers in masochism (the two extremes of the uterine mother and the Oedipal mother) but this is because the whole tendency of masochism is to idealize the functions of the bad mother and transfer them to the good mother. The function of prostitution belongs specifically to the uterine, betaeric mother, and is transformed by the sadistic hero into an institution designed to destroy the Oedipal mother and make the daughter into an accomplice. Although we find in Masoch and masochism a similar propensity to prostitute the woman, we should not regard this as proof that sadism and masochism share in a common nature. The important difference in this case is that in masochism the woman assumes the function of prostitution in her capacity as honest woman, the mother in her capacity as the good oral mother. Wanda relates how Masoch persuaded her to look for lovers, to answer advertisements and to prostitute herself. But he justified this desire as follows: "How delightful to find in one's own respectable, honest and good wife a voluptuousness that must usually be sought among women of easy virtue." The mother, insofar as she is oral, respectable and pure, must assume the function of prostitute normally reserved for the uterine mother. The same is true of the sadistic functions of the Oedipal mother: the administration of cruelty is taken over by the good mother and is thus profoundly transformed and put to the service of the masochistic ideal of expiation and rebirth. Prostitution should not therefore be regarded as a common feature that links up the two perversions.

The dream of a versa prostitution as it appears in Sand's "Confessions of the friends of crime," is embodied in an *objective institution* that aims to destroy the mother and give preferment to the daughter

the mother becomes an outcast and the daughter a partner). In Masoch on the contrary the ideal form of prostitution is based on a private contract whereby the masochist persuades his wife in her capacity as good mother, to give herself to other men.¹⁶ Thus the oral mother as the ideal of masochism is expected to assume all the functions of the other female figures: in taking on these functions, she transforms and subordinates them. This is why we feel that psychoanalytic interpretations relating masochism to the "bad mother" are of very limited applicability.

This concentration of functions in the person of the good oral mother is one of the ways in which the father is cancelled out, and his parts and functions distributed among the three women. The way is thus made clear for the struggle and the epiphany of the three women, which will eventually result in the triumph of the oral woman. In short the three women constitute a symbolic order in which and through which the father is abolished in advance — for all time. This eternal, timeless supremacy of the mother can only be expressed in the language of myth, which is therefore essential to masochism: everything has already happened, and the entire action takes place between the mother images (thus the hunt and the conquest of the fur). It is therefore surprising that even the most enlightened psychoanalytic writers link the emergence of a symbolic order with the "name of the father." This is surely to cling to the singularly unanalytical conception of the mother as the representative of nature and the father as sole principle and representative of culture and law. The masochist experiences the symbolic order as an intermaternal order in which the mother represents the law under certain prescribed conditions; she generates the symbolism through which the masochist expresses himself. It is not a case of identification with the mother as is mistakenly believed. The threefold division of the mother literally expels the father from the masochistic

universe. In *The Siren*, Masoch tells the story of a young boy who allows people to believe that his father is dead merely because he finds it easier and more polite not to dispel a misunderstanding. There is a disavowal of the mother by magnifying her ("symbolically the mother lacks nothing") and a corresponding disavowal of the father by degrading him ("the father is nothing," in other words he is deprived of all symbolic function).

We need therefore to examine more closely the way in which man, the third element, is introduced or reintroduced in the masochistic fantasy. The life and work of Masoch were dominated by the quest for this third party whom he calls "the Greek." However, in *Venus* the character has two aspects. The first or fantasy aspect is effeminate: the Greek is "like a woman. . . . In Paris he has been seen dressed up as a woman, and men were showering him with love letters." The second aspect is virile and marks on the contrary the end of the fantasy and of the masochistic exercise. When the Greek takes up the whip and thrashes Severin the supersensual charm quickly dissolves: "voluptuous dream, woman and love," all melt away. The novel has a sublime and humorous ending, with Severin giving up masochism and turning sadist. We may therefore conclude that the father, though abolished in the symbolic order, nevertheless continues to act in the order of the real,¹⁷ or of experience. There is a fundamental law, first formulated by Jacques Lacan, according to which an object which has been abolished on the symbolic plane resurges in "the real" in a hallucinatory form.¹⁸ The final episode of *Venus* is a typical instance of the aggressive and hallucinatory return of the father in a world that has symbolically abolished him. Everything in the text suggests that the full "reality" of the scene can only be experienced in a hallucinatory manner: the hallucination in return makes the pursuit or continuance of the fantasy impossible. It would therefore be thoroughly misleading to confuse the fantasy

that comes into play in the symbolic order and the hallucination that represents the return of what had been symbolically abolished. Theodor Reik quotes a case where all the "magic" vanishes from the masochistic scene because the subject thinks he recognizes in the woman about to strike him a trait that reminds him of the father.¹⁹ (The same thing happens at the end of *Venus*, and even more strikingly, since here, as a result of the actual substitution of a father figure, the Greek for the torturer, Severin is moved to give up the masochistic aim altogether.) Reik seems to regard the case quoted above as proof that the torturer essentially represents the father and that the mother-image is the father in disguise — an argument once again in favor of a sadomasochistic entity. In our opinion the conclusion should be quite the reverse: Reik maintains that the subject is "disillusioned," but we ought rather to say that he is "disfantasized," fantasy giving way to hallucination and a hallucinatory state. Far from being the truth behind masochism and the confirmation of its connection with sadism, the aggressive return of the father disrupts the masochistic situation; it represents the constant threat from the side of reality to the masochist's world and to the defenses that condition and limit the symbolic world of his perversion. It would be "wild" psychoanalysis to favor this breakdown of his defenses by mistaking the "protest" from external reality for the expression of an inner reality.

What are the masochistic defenses against both the reality and the hallucination of the father's aggressive return? The masochistic hero must evolve a complex strategy to protect his world of fantasy and symbols, and to ward off the hallucinatory invasions of reality (or to put it differently, the real attacks of hallucination). This procedure which, as we shall see, is constantly used in masochism, is the contract. A contract is established between the hero and the woman, whereby at a precise point in time and for a deter-

minate period she is given every right over him. By this means the masochist tries to exorcise the danger of the father and to ensure that the temporal order of reality and experience will be in conformity with the symbolic order, in which the father has been abolished for all time. Through the contract, that is through the most rational and temporarily determinate act, the masochist reaches toward the most mythical and the most timeless realms, where the three mother-images dwell. Finally, he ensures that he will be beaten: we have seen that what is beaten, humiliated and ridiculed in him is the image and the likeness of the father, and the possibility of the father's aggressive return. *It is not a child but a father that is being beaten.* The masochist thus liberates himself in preparation for a rebirth in which the father will have no part.

But how shall we account for the fact that even in the contract the masochist requires a third party, the Greek? Why should he so ardently desire this third party? The answer is that the Greek, while he undoubtedly evokes the danger of the aggressive return of the father, also stands for something more — something of an entirely different kind, namely the hope of a rebirth, the projection of the new man that will result from the masochistic experiment. The Greek is a compound figure combining various elements: when he is idealized he foreshadows the outcome of masochism and stands for the new man; in his sadistic role, by contrast, he represents the dangerous father who brutally interrupts the experiment and interferes with the outcome. Let us remind ourselves of the fundamental structure of fantasy in general: for the art of masochism is the art of fantasy. Fantasy plays on two series, two opposite "margins," and the resonance thus set up gives life to and creates the heart of the fantasy. In masochism the two symbolic margins are the uterine mother and the Oedipal mother; between them and moving from one to the other is the oral mother, the core of the fantasy. The masochist plays

on the two extremes and causes them to produce a resonance in the oral mother. He thereby invests her with an amplitude which repeatedly brings her very close to the figures of her rivals. The oral mother must wrest from the uterine mother her hermetic functions (prostitution) and from the Oedipal mother her sadistic functions (punishment). At either end of her pendulum-like motion, the good mother must confront the third party: the anonymous uterine mother and the sadistic Oedipal mother. But in point of fact (unless things take a turn for the worse as a result of the hallucinatory return of the father, the third party is never invited or sought after for its own sake, but to be neutralized by the substitution of the good mother for the uterine and the Oedipal mother. The adventure with Ludwig II admirably illustrates this: its comic effect is due to the parties put up by the two characters in confrontation.²⁰ When Masoch receives the letters from "Anatole" he sincerely hopes that his correspondent is a woman. But he has already planned his party in case it should be a man: he will introduce Wanda into the affair and in collusion with the third party will get her to perform a hermetic or sadistic function, but in her capacity as good mother. Whereupon Anatole, who has other plans, repries with an unexpected party, and introduces his hunchbacked cousin who is intended to neutralize Wanda herself, contrary to all Masoch's intentions. The question whether masochism is feminine and passive and sadism virile and active is only of secondary importance. In any case it arises from the presupposition that sadism and masochism are complementary, the one being the reverse of the other. But sadism and masochism do not together constitute a single entity; they are not respectively made up of partial impulses, but each is complete in itself. The masochist's experience is grounded in an alliance between the son and the oral mother; the sadist's in the alliance of father and daughter. In both cases this alliance is confirmed

by the respective disguises. In masochism the masculine impulse is embodied in the role of the son, while the feminine impulse is projected in the role of the mother; but as point of fact the two impulses constitute one single figure; femininity is posited as lacking in nothing and placed alongside a virility suspended in disavowal (just as the absence of a penis need not indicate lack of the phallus, its presence likewise need not indicate possession of the phallus). Hence in masochism a girl has no difficulty in assuming the role of son in relation to the beating mother who possesses the ideal phallus and on whom rebirth depends. Similarly, in sadism, it becomes possible for the boy to play the role of a girl in relation to a projection of the father. We might say that the masochist is hermaphrodite and the sadist androgynous. . . . They represent parallel worlds, each complete in itself, and it is both unnecessary and impossible for either to enter the other's world. We cannot at any rate say that they are exact opposites, except insofar as opposites avoid each other and must either do so or perish. This very opposition tends unfortunately to suggest possibilities of transformation, reversal and combination. Yet there is between sadism and masochism an irreducible dissymmetry: sadism stands for the active negation of the mother and the inflation of the father (who is placed above the law); masochism proceeds by a twofold disavowal, a positive, idealizing disavowal of the mother (who is identified with the law) and an invalidating disavowal of the father (who is expelled from the symbolic order).

The Art of Masoch

There is a fundamental aesthetic or plastic element in the art of Masoch. It has been said that the senses become "theoreticians" and that the eye, for example, becomes a human eye when its object itself has been transformed into a human or cultural object, fashioned by and intended solely for man. An animal nature is profoundly hurt when this transmutation of its organs from the animal to the human takes place, and it is the experience of this painful process that the art of Masoch aims to represent. He calls his doctrine "supersensualism" to indicate this cultural state of transmuted sensuality; this explains why he finds in works of art the source and the inspiration of his loves. The lover embraces a marble woman by way of initiation, women become exciting when they are indistinguishable from cold statues in the moonlight or paintings in darkened rooms. Venus is set under the sign of Titian, with its mystical play of flesh, fur and mirror, and the conjunction of cold, cruelty and sentiment. The scenes in Masoch have of necessity a frozen quality, like statues or portraits: they are replicas of works of art, or else they duplicate themselves in mirrors (as when Severin catches sight of his own reflect on in the mirror).

Sade's heroes, by contrast, are not art lovers, still less collec-

tors. In *Fanny Hill*, Sade explains why: "Ah, if only an engraver could record for posterity this divine and voluptuous scene! But lust, which all too quickly crowns our actors, might not have allowed the artist time to portray them. It is not easy for art, which is motionless, to depict an activity the essence of which is movement." Sensuality is movement. In order to convey the immediacy of this action of one soul against another, Sade chooses to rely on the quantitative techniques of accumulation and acceleration, mechanically grounded in a materialistic theory: repetition and internal multiplication of the scenes, precipitation, overdetermination. (The subject is at once parricide, incestuous, murderer, prostitute and sodomite.) We have seen why number, quantity and quantitative precipitation were the specific obsessions of sadism. Masoch, on the contrary, has every reason to rely on art and the immobile and reflective quality of culture. In his view the plastic arts confer an eternal character on their subject because they suspend gestures and attitudes. The whip or the sword that never strikes, the fur that never discloses the flesh, the heel that is forever descending on the victim, are the expression, beyond all movement, of a profound state of waiting closer to the sources of life and death. The novels of Masoch display the most intense preoccupation with arrested movement; his scenes are frozen, as though photographed, stereotyped or painted. In *Venus* it is a painter who says: "Woman, goddess...do you not know what it is to love, to be consumed by longing and passion?" And Wanda looms with her furs and her whip, adopting a suspended posture, like a *zabroya vivante*: "I want to show you another portrait of me, one that I painted myself. You shall copy it." "You shall copy it" suggests both the sternness of the order and the reflection in the mirror.

Waiting and suspense are essential characteristics of the masochistic experience. Hence the ritual scenes of hanging, cruci-

fixion and other forms of physical suspension in Masoch's novels. The masochist is morose but his moroseness should be related to the experience of waiting and delay. It has often been pointed out that the pleasure-pain complex is insufficient to define masochism; but humiliation, expiation, punishment and guilt are not sufficient either. It is argued, justifiably, that the masochist is not a strange being who finds pleasure in pain, but that he is like everyone else, and finds pleasure where others do, the simple difference being that for him pain, punishment or humiliation are necessary prerequisites to obtaining gratification. However, this mechanism remains incomprehensible if it is not related to the form and in particular to the temporal form that makes it possible. Thus it is a mistake to treat the pleasure-pain complex as a raw material able intrinsically to lend itself to any transformation, beginning with the alleged transformation of sadism into masochism. Formally speaking, masochism is a state of waiting; the masochist experiences waiting in its pure form. Pure waiting divides naturally into two simultaneous currents, the first representing what is awaited, something essentially tardy, always late and always postponed, the second representing something that is expected and on which depends the speeding up of the awaited object. It is inevitable that such a form, such a rhythm of division of time into two streams, should be "filled" by the particular combination of pleasure and pain. For at the same time as pain fulfills what is expected, it becomes possible for pleasure to fulfill what is awaited. The masochist waits for pleasure as something that is bound to be late, and expects pain as the condition that will finally ensure (both physically and morally) the advent of pleasure. He therefore postpones pleasure in expectation of the pain which will make gratification possible. The anxiety of the masochist divides therefore into an indefinite awaiting of pleasure and an intense expectation of pain.

Disavowal, suspense, waiting, fetishism and fantasy together make up the specific constellation of masochism. Reality, as we have seen, is affected not by negation but by a disavowal that transposes it into fantasy. Suspense performs the same function in relation to the ideal, which is also relegated to fantasy. Waiting represents the unity of the ideal and the real, the form or temporality of the fantasy. The fetish is the object of the fantasy, the fantasized object par excellence. Consider the following masochistic fantasy: a woman in shorts is pedaling energetically on a stationary bicycle, the subject is lying under the bicycle, the whirling pedals almost brushing him, his palms pressed against the woman's calves. All the elements are conjoined in this image, from the fetishism of the woman's calf to the twofold waiting represented by the motion of the pedals and the immobility of the bicycle. We should say, however, that there is no such thing as a specifically masochistic kind of waiting, but rather that the masochist is morose, by which we mean that he experiences waiting in its pure form. For example, Masoch arranged to have a healthy tooth pulled out while his wife, dressed in furs, stood before him with a threatening air. What is true of masochistic writing is equally true of masochistic fantasy: there is no specifically masochistic fantasy, but rather a masochistic art of fantasy.

The masochist needs to believe that he is dreaming even when he is not; sadism offers no such discipline in the art of the fantasy. Maurice Blanchot has given an excellent analysis of the position of Sade and his characters in relation to fantasy: "The erotic dream consists in projecting the unreal dynamic of his sensuous enjoyment on to characters who are not dreaming but acting. . . . Therefore the more this eroticism is dreamt, the more it requires a fiction from which dreams are excluded and where debauchery is fully actualized."²¹ In other words, Sade needs to believe that he is not dreaming even when he is. In sad-

ism, a powerful force of paranoid projection transforms the fantasy into the instrument of a fundamental and sudden change in the objective world. Clairwill dreams that her wickedness never ceases to impinge on the world even while she is asleep. Hence the pleasure-pain potential characteristic of the fantasy requires for its realization that real characters should experience actual pain, while pleasure accrues to the sadist inasmuch as he can continue to dream that he is not dreaming.

Juliette gives the following advice: "For a whole fortnight abstain from all lustful behavior; distract and entertain yourselves with other things. . . . Then lie down in the dark and little by little imagine different wanton acts. One of these will affect you more powerfully and become like an obsession, and you must then note it down and promptly put it into action." In this way the fantasy acquires maximum aggressive power, systematization and capacity of intervention in the real world: the idea is projected with extraordinary violence. The masochistic use of fantasy is totally different: it consists in neutralizing the real and containing the ideal within the fantasy. In our opinion the difference in the use of the fantasy determines to a certain extent the difference in content. The sadist's destructive relation to the fetish must be interpreted in the light of his projective use of fantasy. To say that the destruction of the fetish implies a belief in the fetish (as profanation is said to imply a belief in the sacred) is to indulge in meaningless generalities. The destruction of the fetish is a measure of the speed with which projection takes place, and of the way in which the dream as such is eliminated and the idea erupts into the real waking world. By contrast, the constitution of the fetish in masochism points to the inner force of the fantasy, its characteristic of patient waiting, its suspended and static power, and the way in which the idea and the real are together absorbed by it.

It would seem that the contents of sadism and masochism are each intended to fulfill a form. Variations in the distribution of the pleasure-pain complex as well as variations in the content of the fantasy (whether the mother or the father is the determinant image) depend on the specific requirements of the form. If we take the material content as our starting point, we solve everything and we arrive besides at the supposed unity of sadism and masochism, but at the price of total confusion. Any given formula for the association of pleasure and pain must take into account certain specific formal conditions (e.g., the form of waiting, the form of projection). "Material" definitions of masochism based on the pleasure-pain complex are insufficient: as the logician would say, they are purely nominal, they do not indicate the possibility of what they define, they do not show that particular conditions must follow. But worse still, they lack distinctive features, and open up the way to all sorts of confusions between sadism and masochism such as the possibility of their reversing into each other. "Moral" definitions based on the concepts of guilt and expiation are no better, since they are based on the alleged communication between sadism and masochism (in this sense they are even more moral than they seem). Fundamentally, masochism is neither material nor moral, but essentially formal. We need, for the understanding of the world of perversions in general, a genuinely formal, almost deductive psychoanalysis which would attend first of all to the formal patterns underlying the processes, viewed as formal elements of fictional art.

In the field of formal psychoanalysis as applied to masochism, the work of Theodore Reik deserves special credit. He distinguished four basic characteristics of masochism:

1. The "special significance of fantasy," that is the form of the fantasy, the fantasy experienced for its own sake, or the scene

which is dreamed, dramatized, ritualized and which is an indispensable element of masochism).

2. The "suspense factor" (the waiting, the delay, expressing the way in which anxiety affects sexual tension and inhibits its discharge).

3. The "demonstrative" or more accurately, the persuasive feature (the particular way in which the masochist exhibits his waiting, embarrassment and humiliation).

4. The "provocative fear" (the masochist aggressively demands punishment since it resolves anxiety and allows him to enjoy the forbidden pleasure).²²

It is curious that Reik, no less than other analysts, neglects a fifth factor which is very important: the form of the contract in the masochistic relationship. In Masoch's personal adventures as well as in his fiction, and in his particular case as well as in the structure of masochism in general, the contract represents the ideal form of the love-relationship and its necessary precondition. A contract is drawn up between the subject and the torturer, giving a new application to the idea of the jurists of an equity that slavery itself is based on a contract. The masochist appears to be held by real chains, but in fact he is bound by his word alone. The masochistic contract implies not only the necessity of the victim's consent, but his ability to persuade, and his pedagogical and judicial efforts to train his torturer. In the two contracts of Masoch reproduced here (see Appendix II) it is interesting to note how the conditions alter from the first to the second contract in the direction of greater strictness: the first contract retains a degree of reciprocity of duties, a time limit, a preservation of inalienable rights (the right of work or the subject's honor); the second confers more and more rights on the woman at the expense of the subject, who loses the right to his name, his honor and his life.²³ (The contract in *Venus* changes Severin's name.) The

tightening of the contractual bond indicates that the function of the contract is to lay down the law, which, once established, becomes increasingly cruel and restrictive toward one of the parties (in this case the initiator of the contract). The function of the masochistic contract is to invest the mother-image with the symbolic power of the law. The question remains why a contract is necessary, and why it develops as it does toward extreme severity. In any case there is no doubt that masochism cannot do without a contract, either actual or in the mind of the masochist (as in the phenomenon of *pagisme*²⁴).

We have now seen the two aspects of the "culturism" of Masoch: the aesthetic aspect which is expressed in the model of art and suspense, and the juridical aspect which is expressed in the model of the contract and of submission. By contrast, Sade is not only supremely indifferent to the resources of the work of art, but he regards the contract and any appeal to its authority, or indeed any idea or theory connected with it, with the deepest hostility. The satirist heaps derision on the principle of the contract. But having said this, we should not simply oppose the culturism of Masoch to the naturalism of Sade. Both authors exhibit a form of naturalism and both distinguish between two natures, but they do not make the same kind of distinction, and above all they have very different views on how the passage from one nature to the other is accomplished. According to Masoch, it is essentially the work of art and the contract that makes possible the transition from a lower nature to the great Nature, which is sentimental and self-conscious. For Sade, on the contrary, the transition from secondary nature to primary nature implies no suspense or system of aesthetics, but an attempt to establish a *machinalité* of perpetual motion, and with it institutions of perpetual motion. Sade's secret societies, his societies of libertines, are institutional societies; in a word, Sade thinks in terms of "institu-

tions," Masoch in terms of "the contract." The juridical distinction between contract and institution is well known: the contract presupposes in principle the free consent of the contracting parties and determines between them a system of reciprocal rights and duties, it cannot affect a third party and is valid for a limited period. Institutions, by contrast, determine a long-term state of affairs which is both involuntary and inalienable; it establishes a power or an authority which takes effect against a third party. But even more significant is the difference between the contract and the institution with respect to what is known as a law: the contract actually generates a law, even if this law oversteps and contravenes the conditions which made it possible; the institution is of a very different order in that it tends to render laws unnecessary, to replace the system of rights and duties by a dynamic model of action, authority and power. Saint-Just accordingly demanded that there should be many institutions and few laws, and proclaimed that the Republic could not be a republic so long as laws had the supremacy over institutions.²⁵ In short, the specific impulse underlying the contract is toward the creation of a law, even if in the end the law should take over and impose its authority upon the contract itself; whereas the corresponding impulse at work in the case of the institution is toward the degradation of all laws and the establishment of a superior power that sets itself above them.

The affinity of Sade's theorizing with the theme of the institution (as well as with certain aspects of Saint-Just's thinking) has often been pointed out. But it is not enough to say that Sade's heroes put institutions at the service of their abnormality, or need them as the limits that give full value to their transgressions. Sade's conception of institutions is more positive and profound, and his relation to revolutionary ideology is accordingly a complex one: he rejects any contractual conception of the republican regime

and is even more strongly against the idea of the law. He found in the Revolution what he hated most: the law and the contract, which he regards as the two main obstacles that still prevent the French from achieving a true republic. The crux of Sade's political thinking is the contrast he draws between the institution and the law, between a republic based on institutions and one based on contractual relations. Saint-Just pointed out the following inverse relation: the fewer institutions, the greater the number of laws (as in monarchy and despotism); the fewer laws, the greater the number of institutions (the republic). Sade seems to have developed this idea to its ironic and perhaps also its most serious conclusion: he asked which institutions would require the fewest possible laws, and ultimately no laws at all (laws "so lenient and so few, . . ."). Laws bind actions; they immobilize and moralize them. Pure institutions without laws would by definition be models of free, anarchic action, in perpetual motion, in permanent revolution, in a constant state of immorality. "Insurrection" is not a moral state of affairs, it has nevertheless to be the permanent condition in a republic. It would be both absurd and dangerous to require that those who are to ensure the perpetual subversion of the established machinery should be moral, for the state of a moral man is one of peace and tranquillity, while the state of immorality is one of perpetual unrest resembling the necessary state of insurrection in which the republican must always keep the government of which he is a member." It would be a mistake to regard the famous text from *Philosophie in the Bedroom*, "Yet another effort, Frenchmen, if you wish to become Republicans," merely as a paradoxical application of sadistic fantasies in the field of politics. The problem that it raises, both on the formal and on the political level, is far more serious and original. It is this: Granted that both the contract and the law are in the nature of mystifications, the law being used by despotism for its own

purposes, and granted that the institution is the only form of political organization that differs essentially from both law and contract, where should we look to for the perfect institution: the one that banishes contracts and allows only the barest minimum of laws? In reply, Sade points to the ironic possibility, under these conditions, of making atheism, calumny, theft, prostitution, incest and sodomy — even murder — into institutions, and shows furthermore that they are necessarily the types of the ideal institution, the institution in perpetual motion. He stresses in particular the possibility of instituting universal prostitution and he attempts to refute the "contractual" objection to such "universalization."

In any case those who contrast Sade's extreme theoretical pronouncements with his very moderate personal stand during the Revolution fail to do justice to his political thought. The opposition that he established between the institution and the contract and its corollary, the opposition between institutions and laws, have become juridical platitudes of positivist thinking. But this is because their original significance and their revolutionary character have been obscured by uneasy compromises. If we wish to recover the original meaning of these oppositions and of the chances and directions they imply, we must return to Sade (and to Saint-Just, who does not give quite the same answers as Sade). There is a profound political insight in Sade's conception of the revolutionary republic as an institution based on opposition to both law and contract, but this conception is ironic through and through because it is sexual and sexualized, as it deliberately challenges any attempt to think of politics in legalistic or contractual terms. We should expect to find in Masoch a comparable tour de force, the humorous converse of Sade's. As against the latter's ironic conception of the institution based on the rejection of law and contract, and in the context of the Revolution of 1789, we have to consider the humorous conception of Masoch and his

conception of the relationship between the contract and the law, in the context of the 1848 Revolution. As a result, fundamental problems of rights begin to emerge in their true light even as they become perverted in the work of Sade and Masoch and turned into literary elements in a parody of the philosophy of history.

Humor, Irony and the Law

The classical conception of the law found its perfect expression in Plato and in that form gained universal acceptance throughout the Christian world. According to this conception, the law may be viewed either in the light of its underlying principles or in the light of its consequences. From the first point of view, the law itself is not a primary but only a secondary or delegated power dependent on a supreme principle which is the Good. If men knew what the Good was, or knew how to conform to it, they would not need laws: the law is only a representative of the Good in a world that the Good has more or less forsaken. Hence, from the point of view of its consequences, obedience to the law is "best," the best being in the image of the Good. The righteous man obeys the laws of the country of his birth or residence, and in so doing acts for the best, even though he retains his freedom of thought, freedom to think of the Good and for the sake of the Good.

This conception, which is seemingly so conventional, nevertheless conceals elements of irony and humor which made political philosophy possible, for it allows the free play of thought at the upper and lower limits of the scale of the law. The death of Socrates is an exemplary illustration of this: the laws place their

tate in the hands of the condemned man, and ask that he should sanction their authority by submitting to them as a rational man. There is indeed a great deal of irony in the operation that seeks to trace the laws back to an absolute Good as the necessary principle of their foundation. Equally, there is considerable humor in the attempt to reduce the laws to a relative Best in order to persuade us that we should obey them. Thus it appears that the notion of law is not self-sufficient unless backed by force, ideally it needs to rest on a higher principle as well as on a consideration of its remote consequences. This may be why, according to the mysterious text in the *Phaedo*, the disciples present at the death of Socrates could not help laughing. Irony and humor are the essential forms through which we apprehend the law. It is in this essential relation to the law that they acquire their function and their significance. Irony is the process of thought whereby the law is made to depend on an infinitely superior Good, just as humor is the attempt to sanction the law by recourse to an infinitely more righteous Best.

The final overthrow of the classical conception of the law was certainly not the result of the discovery of the relativity and variability of laws, since these were fully recognized and understood in this conception and were indeed an integral part of it. The true cause must be sought elsewhere. In the *Critique of Practical Reason* Kant gave a rigorous formulation of a radically new conception, in which the law is no longer regarded as dependent on the Good, but on the contrary, the Good itself is made to depend on the law. This means that the law no longer has its foundation in some higher principle from which it would derive its authority, but that it is self-grounded and valid solely by virtue of its own form. For the first time we can now speak of *THE LAW*, regarded as an absolute, without further specification or reference to an object. Whereas the classical conception only dealt with *the laws* accord-

ing to the various spheres of the Good or the various circumstances attending the Best, Kant can speak of the moral law and of its application to what otherwise remains totally undetermined. The moral law is the representation of a pure form and is independent of content or object, spheres of activity or circumstances. The moral law is *THE LAW* the form of the law and as such it cannot be grounded in a higher principle. In this sense Kant is one of the first to break away from the classical conception of the law and to give us a truly modern conception. The Copernican revolution in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* consisted in viewing the objects of knowledge as revolving around the subject; but the *Critique of Practical Reason*, where the Good is conceived as revolving around the Law, is perhaps even more revolutionary. It probably reflected major changes in the world. It may have been the expression of the ultimate consequences of a return beyond Christianity to Judaic thought, or it may even have foreshadowed a return to the pre-Socratic (Oedipal) conception of the law, beyond to the world of Plato. However that may be Kant, by establishing that *THE LAW* is an ultimate ground or principle, added an essential dimension to modern thought: the object of the law is by definition unknowable and elusive.²⁶

But there is yet a further dimension. We are not concerned here with the architectonics of Kant's system (and the manner in which he salvages the Good in the system), but with a second discovery which is correlated with and complementary to the first. The law can no longer be grounded on the superior principle of the Good, but neither can it be sanctioned any more by recourse to the idea of the Best as representing the good will of the righteous. Clearly *THE LAW*, as defined by its pure form, without substance or object or any determination whatsoever, is such that no one knows nor can know what it is. It operates without making itself known. It defines a realm of transgression where

one is already guilty, and where one oversteps the bounds without knowing what they are, as in the case of Oedipus. Even guilt and punishment do not tell us what the law is but leave it in a state of indeterminacy equaled only by the extreme specificity of the punishment. This is the world described by Kafka. The point is not to compare Kant and Kafka, but to delineate two dimensions of the modern conception of the law.

If the law is no longer based on the Good as a preexisting, higher principle, and it is valid by virtue of its form alone, the content remaining entirely undetermined, it becomes impossible to say that the righteous man obeys the law for the sake of the Best. In other words, the man who obeys the law does not thereby become righteous or feel righteous; on the contrary, he feels guilty and is guilty in advance, and the more strict his obedience, the greater his guilt. This is the process by which the law manifests itself in its absolute purity, and proves us guilty. The two fundamental propositions of the classical conception are overthrown together: the law as grounded in the further principle of the Good; the law as sanctioned by righteousness. Freud was the first to recognize the extraordinary paradox of the conscience: "it is far from the case that obedience to the law secures a feeling of righteousness, 'for the more virtuous a man is, the more severe and distrustful' is the behavior of his conscience toward him; Freud goes on to remark on 'the extraordinary severity of conscience in the best and most tractable people.'"²⁷

Freud resolved the paradox by showing that the renunciation of instinctual gratification is not the product of conscience, but on the contrary that conscience itself is born of such renunciation. Hence it follows that the strength and severity of conscience increases in direct proportion to the strength and severity of the renunciation. Conscience is heir to the repressed instinctual drives. "The effect of instinctual renunciation on the conscience

then is that every piece of aggression whose satisfaction the subject gives up is taken over by the superego and increases the latter's aggressiveness (against the ego)." We are now in a position to unravel the second paradox concerning the fundamentally undetermined character of the law. In Lacan's words, the law is the same as repressed desire. The law cannot specify its object without self-contradiction, nor can it define itself with reference to a content without removing the repression on which it rests. The object of the law and the object of desire are one and the same, and remain equally concealed. When Freud shows that the essential nature of the object relates to the mother while that of desire and the law relates to the father, he does not thereby try to restore a determinate content to the law, he does indeed almost the opposite, he shows how the law, by virtue of its Oedipal origins, must of necessity conceal its content in order to operate as a pure form which is the result of a renunciation both of the object (the mother) and of the subject (the father).

The classical irony and humor of Plato that had for so long dominated all thinking on the subject of the law are thus turned upside down. The upper and lower limits of the law, that is to say the superior principle of the Good and the sanction of the righteous in the light of the Best are reduced to nothingness. All that remains is the indeterminate character of the law on the one hand and the specificity of the punishment on the other. Irony and humor immediately take on a different, modern aspect. They still represent a way of conceiving the law, but the law is now seen in terms of the indeterminacy of its content and of the guilt

of the person who submits to it. Kafka gives testimony and irony their full modern significance in agreement with the transformed character of the law. Max Brod recalls that when Kafka gave a reading of *The Trial*, everyone present, including Kafka himself, was overcome by laughter — as mysterious a phenomenon as the laugh-

ter that greeted the death of Socrates. A spurious sense of tragedy dulls our intelligence. How many authors are distorted by placing a childish tragic construction on what is more often the expression of an aggressively comic force! The comic is the only possible mode of conceiving the law, in a peculiar combination of irony and humor.

In modern thought irony and humor take on a new form: they are now directed at a subversion of the law. This leads us back to Sade and Masoch, who represent the two main attempts at subversion, at turning the law upside down. Irony is still in the process of movement which bypasses the law as a merely secondary power and aims at transcending it toward a higher principle. But what if the higher principle no longer exists, and if the Good can no longer provide a basis for the law or a justification of its power? Sade's answer is that in all its forms — natural, moral and political — the law represents the rule of secondary nature which is always geared to the demands of conservation; it is a usurpation of true sovereignty. It is irrelevant whether we see the law as the expression of the rule of the strongest or as the product of the self-protective union of the weak. Masters and slaves, the strong and the weak, all are creatures of secondary nature; the union of the weak merely favors the emergence of the tyrant; his existence depends on it. In every case the law is a mystification: it is not a delegated but a usurped power that depends on the infamous complicity of slaves and masters. It is significant that Sade attacks the regime of laws as being the regime of the tyrannized and of the tyrants. Only the law can tyrannize: "I have infinitely less reason to fear my neighbor's passions than the law's injustice, for my neighbor's passions are contained by mine, whereas nothing stops or contains the injustices of the law." Tyrants are created by the law alone: they flourish by virtue of the law. As Chigi says in *Juliette*, "Tyrants are never born in anarchy, they only flour-

ish in the shadow of the laws and draw their authority from them." Sade's hatred of tyranny, his demonstration that the law enables the tyrant to exist, form the essence of his thinking. The tyrant speaks the language of the law, and acknowledges no other, for he lives "in the shadow of the laws." The heroes of Sade are inspired with an extraordinary passion against tyranny; they speak as no tyrant ever spoke or could ever speak: theirs is the counter-language of tyranny.

We now note a new attempt to transcend the law, this time no longer in the direction of the Good as superior principle and ground of the law, but in the direction of its opposite: the idea of Evil, the supreme principle of wickedness, which subverts the law and turns Platonism upside down. Here, the transcendence of the law implies the discovery of a primary nature which is in every way opposed to the demands and the rule of secondary nature. It follows that the idea of absolute evil embodied in primary nature cannot be equated either with tyranny — for tyranny presupposes laws — or with a combination of whims and arbitrariness; its higher, impersonal model is rather to be found in the anarchic institutions of perpetual motion and permanent revolution. Sade often stresses the fact that the law can only be transcended toward an institutional model of anarchy. The fact that anarchy can only exist in the interval between two regimes based on laws, abolishing the old to give birth to the new, does not prevent this divine interval, this vanishing instant, from testifying to its fundamental difference from all forms of the law. The reign of laws is pernicious; it is inferior to that of anarchy. The best proof of this is that all governments are forced to plunge into anarchy when they wish to remake their constitutions." The law can only be transcended by virtue of a principle that subverts it and denies its power.

While the sadian hero subverts the law, the masochist should

not by contrast be regarded as gladly submitting to it. The element of contempt in the submission of the masochist has often been emphasized: his apparent obedience conceals a criticism and a provocation. He simply attacks the law on another flank. What we call humor — in contradistinction to the upward movement of irony toward a transcendent higher principle — is a downward movement from the law to its consequences. We all know ways of twisting the law by excess of zeal. By scrupulously applying the law we are able to demonstrate its absurdity and provoke the very disorder that it is intended to prevent or to conjure. By observing the very letter of the law, we refrain from questioning its ultimate or primary character; we then behave as if the supreme sovereignty of the law conferred upon it the enjoyment of all those pleasures that it denies us; hence, by the closest adherence to it, and by zealously embracing it, we may hope to partake of its pleasures. The law is no longer subverted by the upward movement of irony to a principle that overrides it, but by the downward movement of humor which seeks to reduce the law to its furthest consequences. A close examination of masochistic fantasies or rites reveals that while they bring into play the very strictest application of the law, the result in every case is the opposite of what might be expected (thus whipping, far from punishing or preventing an erection, provokes and ensures it). It is a demonstration of the law's absurdity. The masochist regards the law as a punitive process and therefore begins by having the punishment inflicted upon himself; once he has undergone the punishment, he feels that he is allowed or indeed commanded to experience the pleasure that the law was supposed to forbid. The essence of masochistic humor lies in this, that the very law which forbids the satisfaction of a desire under threat of subsequent punishment is converted into one which demands the punishment first and then orders that the satisfaction of the desire

should necessarily follow upon the punishment. Once more, Theodor Reik gives an excellent analysis of this process. masochism is not pleasure in pain, not even in punishment: at most, the masochist gets a preliminary pleasure from punishment or discomfort; his real pleasure is obtained subsequently, in that which is made possible by the punishment. The masochist must undergo punishment before experiencing pleasure. It would be a mistake to confuse this temporal succession with logical causality: suffering is not the cause of pleasure itself but the necessary precondition for achieving it. "The temporal reversal points at a reversal of the contents. . . . The previous 'You must not do that' has been transmuted into 'You have to do that'". What else but a demonstration of absurdity is aimed at, when the punishment for forbidden pleasure brings about this very same pleasure?"²⁸ The same process is reflected in the other features of masochism, such as disavowal, suspense and fantasy, which should be regarded as so many forms or aspects of humor. The masochist is insolent in his obsequiousness, rebellious in his submission, in short, he is a humorist, a logician of consequences, just as the ironic sadist is a logician of principles.

From the idea that the law should not be based on the principle of the Good but on its form alone, the sadist fashions a new method of ascending from the law to a superior principle. This principle, however, is the informal element of a primary nature which aims at the subversion of all laws. In the other modern discovery that the law increases the guilt of the person who submits to it, the masochist in his turn finds a new way of descending from the law to its consequences: he stands guilt on its head by making punishment into a condition that makes possible the forbidden pleasure. In so doing he overthrows the law as radically as the sadist, though in a different way. We have seen how these methods proceed, ideologically speaking. The Oedipal content

which always remains concealed, undergoes a dual transformation — as though the mother-father complementarity had been shattered twice and asymmetrically. In the case of sadism the father is placed above the law; he becomes a higher principle with the mother as his essential victim. In the case of masochism the totality of the law is invested upon the mother, who expels the father from the symbolic realm.

CHAPTER VI

From Contract to Ritual

Some authors have stressed the importance of anxiety in masochism (cf. Reik, Nacht). Punishment, in their view, would only figure so prominently because of its function in resolving anxiety and thereby making pleasure possible. But this explanation fails to determine under what particular conditions punishment assumes its anxiety-resolving function, nor especially how anxiety and its object-implicies are not only "resolved" but, on a more subtle level, distorted and parodied to serve the aims of masochism. We must analyze what seems to us the essence of the formula proposed, namely the transference of the law onto the mother and the identification of the law with the image of the mother. It is only under these conditions that punishment acquires its original function and that guilt is transformed into triumph. At first sight, however, the transference onto the mother would hardly seem to account for the feeling of "relief" inherent in masochism, for there is no reason to expect greater leniency from the side of the sentimental, icy and cruel mother.

It is already apparent that in his attempt to derive the law from the contract, the masochist aims not to mitigate the law but on the contrary to emphasize its extreme severity. For while the contract implies in principle certain conditions like the free accept-

ance of the parties, a limited duration and the preservation of inalienable rights, the law that it generates always tends to forget its own origins and annul these restrictive conditions. Thus the contract-law relationship involves in a sense a mystification. To imagine that a contract or quasi contract is at the origin of society is to invoke conditions which are necessarily invalidated as soon as the law comes into being. For the law, once established, violates the contract in that it can apply to a third party, is valid for an indeterminate period and recognizes no inalienable rights. This process of invagination of the contract by the law is reflected, as we have seen, in the peculiar progression of Masoch's successive love-contracts, the terms of which become increasingly strict, as if to prepare the way for the law that will eventually override them. Since the law results in our enslavement, we should place enslavement first, as the dreadful object of the contract. One could even say, as a general rule, that in masochism the contract is caricatured in order to emphasize its ambiguous destination. The contract may indeed be said to exemplify the very type of a culture-bound relationship that is artificial, Apollonian and virgile, as opposed to the natural, chthonic relations which bind us to the mother and the woman. In the contractual relation the woman typically figures as an object in the patriarchal system. The contract in masochism reverses this state of affairs by making the woman into the party with whom the contract is entered into. Its paradoxical intention extends even further in that it involves a master-slave relationship, and one furthermore in which the woman is the master and torturer. The contractual basis is thereby implicitly challenged, by excess of zeal, a humorous acceleration of the clauses and a complete reversal of the respective contractual status of man and woman. Hence we have once more a sort of demystification of the contract, inasmuch as it is made deliberately to promote slavery and even death at the ser-

vice of the woman and the mother. The ultimate paradox is that such a contract should be initiated, and the power conferred, by the victim himself, that is to say the male party. Sade's ironic attitude to the 1789 Revolution is that the Revolution would remain sterile unless it gave up making laws and set up institutions of perpetual motion; it is paralleled by Masoch's humorous attitude to the revolutions of 1848 and the Pan-Slavic movement. He suggests that contracts should be drawn up with a terrible Tsarina, thus ensuring the most sentimental but at the same time the coldest and severest law. (In *Live Stones*, Masoch considers the problems discussed by the Pan-Slavic congresses and he asks: Will the Slavs achieve unity for Russia by getting rid of the Tsarist regime or should they aim for a strong State under the rule of a Tsarina of genius?)²⁹

What does the victim expect by entering into this extreme form of contract with the mother? The aim is seemingly naive and straightforward. The masochistic contract excludes the father and displaces onto the mother the task of exercising and applying the paternal law. But we have seen that the mother is both stern and cruel. The problem, however, should be stated differently: the same threat which, when experienced as coming from the father and linked to his image, has the effect of preventing incest, has the reverse effect when entrusted to the mother and associated with her image: it then makes incest possible and ensures its success. Here the transference is very effective. As a general rule castration acts as a threat preventing incest or a punishment that controls it, it is an obstacle to or a chastisement of incest. But when it is linked with the image of the mother the castration of the son becomes the very condition of the success of incest: incest is assimilated by this displacement to a second birth which dispenses with the father's role. "Interrupted love" is an important feature of masochism to which many authors have

drawn attention, its function is to facilitate the masochist's identification of sexual activity with both incest and second birth: a process which not only saves him from the threat of castration but actually turns castration into the symbolic condition of success.

The masochistic contract generates a type of law which leads straight into ritual. The masochist is obsessed; ritualistic activity is essential to him, since it epitomizes the world of fantasy. Three main types of rite occur in Masoch's novels: hunting rites, agricultural rites and rites of regeneration and rebirth. They echo the three fundamental elements: the cold, that requires the conquest of the fur, the trophy of the hunt, the buried sentimentality and sheltered fecundity which agriculture demands, together with the strictest organization of work, and finally that very element of strictness, that cruel rigor which regeneration and rebirth demand. The coexistence and interaction of these three rites sum up the mythical complex of masochism. We find it again and again, variously embodied throughout the work of Masoch: the ideal woman hunts the bear or the wolf; she organizes or presides over an agricultural community; she makes man undergo a process of rebirth. The last would appear to be the essential rite in which the other two culminate and from which they derive their function in the totality of the myth.

In *Wolf and She-wolf* the heroine asks her suitor to let himself be sewn into a wolf's skin and to live and howl and be hunted like a wolf. The ritual hunt is instrumental to rebirth; by taking possession of the trophy of the primitive, uterine mother, the second mother, that is to say the oral mother, acquires the power to bring about a rebirth. This second birth is independent both of the father and of the uterine mother; it is a parthenogenesis. Klaus gives a detailed description of an agrarian rite: the Negresses "led me to a vineyard that lay along the south side of the garden. Maize had been planted between the vines and a few dry heads

were still standing; a plough had been left there. The blackamoors led me to a stake and amused themselves by pricking me with golden harpins. But this did not last long, for Wanda appeared with her ermine toque, her hands in the pockets of her jacket. She told them to untie me and fasten my hands behind my back. Then she had a yoke laid on my shoulders and I was harnessed to the plough. The black demons pushed me into the field, one drove the plough, the other led me on a leash, and the third whipped me with the whip, while Venus in Furs stood by watching the scene."

The three Negresses stand for the three mother images; we notice, however, that the oral mother is split: she occurs twice, once as an element in the triad, on a par with the other women, and afterward outside the triad, presiding over it, having appropriated and transformed all the functions of the other women in order to serve the theme of rebirth. Everything points to a parthenogenesis: the marriage of the vine and the maize (the Ionian element and the female agrarian community); the pinpricking, representing union with the mother; the pinpricking and the whipping, representing parthenogenetic stimulation; the new birth of the son drawn out by the rope.³⁰ We have once more the theme of the choice between the three mothers, the oscillating movement of the pendulum, and the final absorption of both the uterine and the Oedipal mothers by the triumphant oral mother. She is mistress of the Law — what Masoch calls "the law of the commune, in which the hunting, the agrarian and the matriarchal elements become fully integrated. The uterine mother, the hunter, is herself hunted down and despoiled, the Oedipal mother, or mother of the shepherd, already integrated in the patriarchal system (as victim or as accomplice) is likewise sacrificed. The oral mother alone remains triumphant; she is the common essence of agriculture, matriarchy and rebirth. Hence the dream

of agrarian communism which recurs throughout the work of Masoch and underlies his "blue tales of happiness" (*Marcella, The Paradise on the Dniestr, The Aesthetics of Ugliness*). A deep bond is forged between the commune, the law of the commune embodied in the oral mother, and the man of the commune, who can only be born by being reborn of the oral mother.

The two principle male figures in Masoch's work are Cain and Christ. Their sign is the same, the sign of Cain prefiguring the sign of the cross which used to be written as X or as +. That Cain should occupy such an important place in the work of Masoch has a very wide range of significance. He symbolizes in the first place the omnipresence of crime in nature and history, and the immensity of man's sufferings ("My punishment is more than I can bear"). But beyond this, there is the fact that Cain is a "tiller of the ground" and the favorite of the mother: Eve greeted his birth with cries of joy, but did not rejoice at the birth of Abel, the "keeper of sheep," who is on the father's side. The mother's favorite went so far as to commit a crime to sever the alliance between the father and the other son: he killed his father's likeness and made Eve into the goddess-mother. (Herman Hesse's strange novel, *Demian*, interweaves Nietzschean and masochistic themes: the mother-goddess is identified with Eve, a female giant who bears on her forehead the mark of Cain.) Masoch is attracted to Cain not only because of the torments he suffers but also by the very crime that he commits. His crime should not be regarded as a sadomasochistic archetype, for the entire project falls squarely within the world of masochism, with its attendant features of loyalty to the maternal rule, dedication to the oral mother, expulsion of the father, and its elements of humor and provocation. Cain's "heritage" is a "mark": his punishment by the Father represents the aggressive, hallucinatory return of the latter so much for the first episode. The second episode is the story

of Christ: the likeness of the father is once more abolished ("Why hast thou forsaken me?"), but here it is the Mother who crucifies the Son; in the masochistic elaboration of the Marian fantasy, the Virgin is person put on the cross, thus Masoch's version of "the death of God." By putting him on the cross and thus placing him under the same sign as the son of Eve, the Virgin carries on the aim of the mother-goddess, the great oral mother: she ensures the parthenogenetic second birth of the son in his resurrection. But again, it is not the son who dies so much as God for his Father, that is the likeness of the father in the son. The cross represents the maternal image of death, the mirror in which the narcissistic self of Christ (Cain) apprehends his ideal self (Christ resurrected).

But we may wonder why there should be so much pain in both cases and why expiation should be the necessary precondition of the second birth. Why should such a terrible punishment be inflicted upon Cain, and why should Christ's torture be so unbearable? Why is Christology an all-pervasive element in the work of Masoch? While Sade was concerned above all with rationalistic and atheistic, masonic and anarchistic societies, Masoch gave his attention to the mystical agrarian sects of his day (such as those found in the Austrian Empire). Two of his novels, *The Fisher of Souls* and *The Mother of God* actually deal with these sects; they are among his finest. Their rarefied and stilling atmosphere, the intense portrayal of willingly accepted torture is unparalleled except in the best works of H. H. Ewers, who also specialized in sects (*The Sorcerer's Apprentice*). The story of *The Mother of God* is as follows: The heroine, Mardona, rules over her sect or commune in a manner that combines the qualities of tenderness, severity and coldness. She is wrathful and orders people to be whipped or stoned; yet she is gentle. Indeed the whole sect is gentle and gay, though intolerant of sinfulness and hostile to disorder. Mardona

has a servant girl, Nimsodora, a graceful, melancholy maiden who gashes her arm so that the Mother of God may bathe in the blood, drink of it and thus gain eternal youth. Sabadil loves Mardona but he loves Nimsodora too, though in a different way. Mardona is disturbed by this, and speaking as the Mother of God, she says to Sabadil: "It is the love of the Mother of God that brings redemption and gives new birth to man. . . I have not succeeded in changing your flesh and transforming your carnal love into divine affection. . . I have become to you nothing more than a judge. She asks that he consent to be tortured, and orders him to be nailed to the cross. Nimsodora nails down his hands and Mardona his feet. Mardona then enters into a painful ecstasy, while at nightfall Sabadil enacts the Passion of Christ. To Mardona he cries, "Why has thou forsaken me?" and to Nimsodora, "Why has thou betrayed me?" The Mother of God must crucify her son in order that he should truly become her son and enjoy the privilege of a rebirth from her alone.

In *The Siren*, Zenobia cuts off Theophan's hair and exclaims: "At last I have succeeded in making a man of you." Similarly, in *The Divorced Woman*, Anna longs to be worthy of her task, to whip Juhan and to be able at last to say to him: "You have been through the ordeal, now you are a man." The theme recurs again in a fine short story where Masoch recounts the life of a seventeenth-century Messiah, Sabbatai Zwi. Sabbatai Zwi is a cabbalist and fanatic given to self-mortification: he marries Sarah, but does not consummate the union; he tells her, "You will be by my side, like a gentle torture." On the order of the rabbis he leaves her for Hannah, and repeats his previous behavior with her. He finally marries Miriam, a young Polish Jewess, but she anticipates him and forbids him to touch her. In love with Miriam, he leaves for Constantinople, where he tries to convince the Sultan of his Messianic mission. Meanwhile, whole cities are swept with

enthusiasm; he has already won over Salonika, Smyrna, Cairo: his fame has even spread as far as Europe. He leads a determined battle against the rabbis, and announces to the Jews the return to Judaism. The Sultana is displeased and informs Miriam that she will have Sabbatai put to death if he does not mend his ways. Miriam then orders him to bathe at the confluence of the three rivers, Aras, Tuntcha and Narisso. One cannot help recognizing in the three rivers and in the three wives of Sabbatai the three mother-images, and in Miriam the oral mother, who triumphs over them. Miriam makes him confess to her, crowns him with horns and whips him, and finally consummates the marriage. "Woman, what have you done to me?" "I have made a man of you." The next day, summoned by the Sultan, he recants and becomes a Muslim. Thereupon, his numerous followers, even among the Turks, declare that the Messiah can only appear in a perfectly virtuous world or else in a totally evil one, and since apostasy is the worst of all crimes, they declare that they will all become apostates to save the Messiah.

But what is the significance of this constantly recurring theme: "You are not a man, I am making a man of you?" What does "becoming a man" signify? Clearly it does not mean to be like the father, or to take his place. On the contrary, it consists in obliterating his role and his likeness in order to generate the new man. The tortures are in effect directed at the father, or at his likeness in the son. We argued earlier that the masochistic fantasy is less an instance of "a child being beaten" than of a father being beaten in many of Masoch's tales. It is the master who undergoes the tortures: thus in *Theodore* or *The Living Bench*, in the course of a peasant revolt led by the women of the commune, the master is harnessed to the plough side by side with the ox, or is used as a bench to sit upon. When the torture is inflicted upon the hero—that is to say the son, the lover or the child—we should conclude

that what is beaten, foresworn and sacrificed, what is ritually expiated, is the father's likeness, the genital sexuality inherited from the father — however miniaturized he may be. This is the real "Apostasy." To become a man is to be reborn from the woman alone, to undergo a second birth. This is why castration, and the "interrupted love" which represents castration, cease to be an obstacle to or a punishment of incest, and become instead a precondition of its success with the mother, since it is then equated with a second, autonomous and parthenogenetic rebirth. The masochist practices three forms of disavowal at once: the first magnifies the mother, by attributing to her the phallus instrumental to rebirth; the second excludes the father, since he has no part in this rebirth; and the third relates to sexual pleasure, which is interrupted, deprived of its genitality and transformed into the pleasure of being reborn.

The final objective of Masoch's work expresses itself in the myth that embraces both Cain and Christ: Christ is not the son of God but the new Man, his likeness to the father is abolished, he is "Man on the Cross, who knows no sexual love, no property, no fatherland, no cause, no work. . . ."

We were not able to give material definitions of masochism, since the combinations of pleasure and pain in a specific sensual experience imply certain formal conditions which cannot be ignored without confusing everything, especially sadism and masochism. Nor is a moral definition of masochism in terms of guilt any more adequate. Guilt and expiation (no less than a particular pleasure-pain combination) are genuinely and deeply experienced by the masochist, but here again the important point is to know in what form guilt is experienced. The depth and intensity of a feeling is not affected by the uses which it may be made to serve,

including even parody; the nature of the feeling, however, will correspondingly. The psychoanalytic statement to the effect that the masochist experiences guilt in relation to the father (in Reik's words, since the punishment comes from the father, the crime must have been committed against the father), clearly leads to the creation of an arbitrary etiology which is solely determined by the tendency to derive masochism from sadism. There is no doubt that the masochist lives in the very depths of guilt but, far from feeling that he has sinned against the father, it is the father's likeness in him that he experiences as a sin which must be atoned for. Hence guilt is turned completely upside down: it is both at its deepest and its most absurd. It is an integral part of the masochist's triumph, and ensures his liberation. Indeed it is indistinguishable from humor. It is quite inadequate to say, as Reik does, that the punishment resolves the anxiety arising from guilt, and makes possible the forbidden pleasure. The humor which characterizes the masochist's predicament is already at work in the very intensity of his sense of guilt, no less than in the severity of the punishment, for it is the father who is guilty in the son, not the son in relation to the father. Masochism in its material aspects is a phenomenon of the senses (i.e., a certain combination of pain and pleasure); in its moral aspects it is a function of feeling or sentiment. But beyond all sensation or feeling there is a third element, a superpersonal element that animates the masochist: this is the story in which he relates the triumph of the old mother, the abolition of the father's likeness and the consequent birth of the new man. Of course the masochist must use his body and his soul to write this story, but there is nevertheless a formal masochism which preexists physical, sensual or material masochism, just as there is a dramatic masochism before any moral or sentimental masochism. Hence the theatrical impression which is conveyed at the point where the masochist's feelings are at their

deepest and his pain and sensation most intensely experienced.

We have traced a progression from the contract to the myth, through the intermediary of the law; for the law transcends the contract but leads us straight into ritual and myth. By means of the contract the paternal function of applying the law was transferred to the mother, resulting in the most radical transformation of the law. The law now ordains what it was once intended to forbid; guilt absolves instead of leading to atonement, and punishment makes permissible what it was intended to chastise. The law has become essentially maternal, leading into those regions of the unconscious where the three images of the mother hold supreme sway. The contract represents a personal act of will on the part of the masochist, but through the contract, and the vicarious rules of the law that issues from it, the masochist is led back to the impersonal realm of fate, which finds expression in the myth and in the rites that we have described. The situation that the masochist establishes by contract, at a specific moment and for a specific period, is already fully contained timelessly and ritually in the symbolic order of masochism. For the masochist, the modern contract as it is elaborated in the bedroom corresponds to the oldest rites once enacted in the swamps and the steppes. The novels of Masoch reflect this twofold history and bring out the identity between its most modern and its most ancient forms.

Psychoanalysis and the Problem of Masochism

Freud gave two successive accounts of sadomasochism, the first in relation to the duality of the sexual and the ego-instincts, the second in relation to the duality of the life and the death instincts. Both accounts tend to treat sadomasochism as a particular entity within which transitions occur from one component to the other. We want to examine to what extent these two accounts are really different, to what extent they both imply a "transformist" attitude on the part of Freud, and finally to what extent the hypothesis of a duality of instincts limits in both cases the "transformist" argument.

In the first account, masochism is seen as deriving from sadism by a process of reversal. Every instinct is thought to include aggressive components which are directed upon its object and necessary to the realization of its aim; sadism would, in this view, have its origin in the aggressive component of the sexual instincts. In the course of a love-relationship the aggressive-sadistic component may become conditioned in such a way that it is turned around against the subject's own self. The factors determining this turning around are of two main types: aggression against the father and mother may be turned around upon the self either under the effect of "fear of loss of love" or as the result of guilt-feelings

(linked with the formation of the superego). These two conditions of masochistic "turning around" are quite distinct — as B. Grünberger pointed out — the first having a pregenital and the second an Oedipal source.³³ But in either case the father-image and the mother-image have very unequal roles, for even though the transgression bears on the person of the mother, its essential object must still be the father: he is the one who possesses the penis, the one whom the child wishes to castrate or to kill; he is the one who punishes, and who must be placated by this process of turning around. Hence, in every case, the father-image seems to have a pivotal role.

It soon becomes apparent, for a variety of reasons, that masochism cannot simply be defined as a form of sadism turned around upon the self. The first reason is that the process of turning around is necessarily accompanied by a *desexualization* of libidinal aggression, that is the relinquishing of specifically sexual aims. Freud shows in particular that the formation of the superego or conscience, which marks the resolution of the Oedipus complex, implies the desexualization of the latter. In this sense it is possible to conceive of a reversal of sadism, with the superego acting sadistically upon the ego without the ego itself being masochistic. There is no masochism proper without a reactivation of the Oedipus complex, hence without a "resexualization" of the conscience. Masochism is characterized not by guilt-feelings but by the desire to be punished, the purpose of masochism being to resolve guilt and the corresponding anxiety and make sexual gratification possible. Hence masochism should be defined less by the process of turning around itself than by the resexualization of the aggression turned upon the self in this process.

The second reason is concerned with another and quite distinct aspect of masochistic sexualization, namely its specific "erogenicity." We may well grant that punishment should resolve

or satisfy feelings of guilt, but this only constitutes a preliminary pleasure of a *moral* nature that merely prepares for sexual pleasure or makes it possible; it does not explain how sexual pleasure actually occurs in association with the *physical* pain of punishment. The fact is that the process of sexualization could never culminate without a particular masochistic erogenicity. For this we require some material basis, some peculiar link which the masochist experiences between his pain and his sexual pleasure. Freud suggested the hypothesis of "libidinal sympathetic co-excitation," according to which processes and excitations overstepping certain quantitative limits become erotically charged. This hypothesis recognizes the existence of an irreducible masochistic basis. This is why Freud, even in his first interpretation, not content with saying that masochism is a reversed form of sadism, he also maintains that sadism is a projected form of masochism, since the sadist can only take pleasure in the pain he inflicts upon others to the extent that he has himself experienced "masochistic joys" — the link between pleasure and pain. Freud nevertheless maintains the primacy of sadism, while distinguishing between (1) a purely aggressive sadism, (2) a turning around of sadism upon the self, (3) the masochistic experience and (4, a narcissistic sadism. But even if one maintains that the intermediary masochistic experience presupposes a turning around of aggression upon the self, this turning around must be regarded as one of the conditions for discovering the masochistic experience of a link between pain and pleasure, and cannot be said to constitute this link — the very possibility of which must point to a specific masochistic basis.³⁴

There is yet a third reason: the process of turning around upon the self may be regarded as a *reflexive* stage, as in obsessional neurosis ("I punish myself"), but since masochism implies a passive stage ("I am punished, I am beaten"), we must infer the existence

in masochism of a particular mechanism of projection through which an external agent is made to assume the role of the subject. This third reason is clearly connected with the first: resexualization is inseparable from projection (conversely the reflexive stage is indicative of a sadistic superego which remains desexualized). It is in terms of this projection that psychoanalysis tries to account for the role played by the mother-image. Since, according to the theory, the masochist's aim is to escape from the consequences of the transgression against the father, he proceeds to identify with the mother and offers himself to the father as a sexual object; however, since this would in turn renew the threat of castration which he is trying to avert, he chooses "being beaten" both as exorcism of "being castrated" and as a regressive substitute of "being loved"; at the same time the mother takes on the role of the person who beats, as a result of repression of the homosexual choice. Alternatively, the subject shifts the blame on the mother ("It is not I, it is she who wishes to castrate the father"), either in order to identify with the bad mother under the cover of projection and thus take possession of the father's penis (perverse masochism); or else, on the contrary, to make any such identification impossible by maintaining the projection and substituting himself as the victim (moral masochism: "It is not the father, it is I who am castrated").³⁵

For these various reasons we must reject as inadequate the formula "sadism turned around upon the self" as a definition of masochism. It needs to be supplemented by three other considerations: the sadism must be (1) resexualized, (2) the resexualization must be grounded in a new erogenicity and (3) the sadism must be projected. These three determinations correspond to the three aspects of masochism which Freud distinguishes even in his first interpretation: an erotogenic aspect, as a basis for sexual excitation, a passive aspect, accounting in a very complex manner

both for the projection onto the woman and for the identification with her, and a moral aspect or sense of guilt, to which the process of resexualization is related.³⁶ But the question is whether we save the Freudian theory by supplementing it in this way or whether on the contrary we severely affect its validity. Reik, who maintains throughout the idea that masochism is derived from sadism, nevertheless points out that masochism "springs from the denial that meets the sadistic instinctual impulse and develops from the sadistic, aggressive or defiant phantasy which replaces reality. It remains incomprehensible as long as one assumes its derivation directly from sadism by a facing about against the ego. Much as psychoanalysts and sexologists may oppose such an opinion, I maintain that the birthplace of masochism is phantasy."³⁷ In other words, the masochist has renounced his sadistic impulse, even turned around upon himself. What he does is to neutralize his sadism in fantasy, substituting his dream for action; hence the primary importance of fantasy. Given these conditions, the violence that the masochist inflicts or causes to be inflicted upon himself can no longer be called sadistic, since it is based on his particular type of suspension. The question, once more, is whether we can still affirm the principle of a derivation when the derivation has ceased to be direct and therefore disproves the hypothesis of a straightforward turning around.

Freud maintains that no direct transformation can take place between impulses or instincts that are qualitatively distinct; their qualitative difference precludes any transition from one to the other. This is certainly true of the sexual and the ego instincts. Undoubtedly sadism and masochism, like any other psychic formations, represent particular combinations of the two instincts, but any "passage" from one combination to the other as, for instance, from sadism to masochism, can only occur by a process of desexualization and resexualization. In masochism the

ocus or theater of this process is fantasy. Are we to say that the same subject participates in both sadistic and masochistic sexuality, given that the one implies the desexualization of the other? Is this desexualization an actual process experienced by the masochist (in which case a transition could be said to occur, however indirectly), or is it on the contrary a structural presupposition of masochism which severs it from all communication with sadism? When we are given two stories, it is always possible to bridge the gaps that separate them, but in the process we arrive at a third story of a different quality from the other two. The psychoanalytical theory of sadomasochism appears to be doing just this: for instance, the image of the father, in view of its importance in sadism, is regarded as still continuing to operate in masochism, disguised under the mother-image and determining its role. This method has a serious drawback in that it displaces the emphasis and gives critical importance to secondary factors. For example, the theme of the bad mother does indeed appear in masochism, but only as a marginal phenomenon, the central position being occupied by the good mother: it is the good mother who possesses the phallus, who beats and humiliates the subject or even prostitutes herself. If we ignore this and give prominence to the bad mother, it is all too easy to reestablish the link with the father, and the corresponding link between sadism and masochism. The existence of the good mother, on the other hand, implies the existence of a gap or blank which stands for the abolition of the father in the symbolic order. Again, while the sense of guilt has great importance in masochism, it acts only as a cover, as the humorous outcome of a guilt that has already been subverted: for it is no longer the guilt of the child toward the father, but that of the father himself, and of his likeness in the child. Here again we come across a "blank" which is hurriedly filled in by psychoanalysis for the purpose of deriving masochism from sad-

ism. The fallacy is to treat as an ongoing process a state of affairs which must already obtain, which must already be presupposed for masochism to be possible. When guilt is experienced "masochistically," it is already distorted, artificial and ostentatious; similarly, the father is experienced as already abolished symbolically. In trying to fill in the gaps between masochism and sadism, we are liable to fall into all kinds of misapprehensions, both theoretical and practical or therapeutic. Hence our contention that masochism can be defined neither as erotogenic and sensuous (pleasure-pain), nor as moral and sentimental (guilt-punishment), is based on these observations: it negates the possibility of any manner of transformation. Masochism is above all formal and ceremonial: this means that its peculiar pleasure-pain complex is determined by a particular kind of formalism, and its experience of guilt by a specific story. In the field of pathology every disturbance is characterized by "gaps" and it is only by grasping at the structures demarcated by these gaps and taking the greatest care not to fill them in that we may hope to avoid the illusions of "transformation," and to make progress in our analysis of the disturbance.

Doubts about the unity and intercommunication of sadism and masochism are further reinforced when we come to Freud's second interpretation. The qualitative duality is now that of the life and the death instincts, Eros and Thanatos. Let us immediately note, however, that the Death Instinct, which is a pure principle, can never be given as such: all that is given or can be given are combinations of the two instincts. According to Freud, the Death Instinct manifests itself in two different ways, depending on whether, under the action of Eros, it is turned outward (sadism) or whether part of it remains as a residue libidinally "bound" within the organism (masochism). In the latter case we have masochism of the erotogenic type, which is primary and no longer derived from sadism. Nevertheless, we reencounter the previous

theory in terms of "turned around" sadism which produces the other types of masochisms (the passive and the moral), and we are faced once again, even more starkly, with our previous doubts. For it now appears that the passage from sadism to masochism implies not only the process of desexualization and resexualization but equally a defusion of instincts as well as their combination. Both sadism and masochism imply that a particular quantity of libidinal energy be neutralized, desexualized, displaced and put at the service of Thanatos. Thus we never have a direct transformation of one instinct into another, but a "displacement of cathectic energy." This is what Freud means by "defusion." He isolated two fundamental occurrences of defusion, narcissism and the formation of the superego. The whole problem lies in the nature of these processes of defusion and in how they are related to the combination of the instincts (fusion). Everywhere we meet with a combination of the two instincts, but at the same time defusion is at work everywhere.

CHAPTER X

The Death Instinct

Amid the writings of Freud the masterpiece which we know as *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* is perhaps the one where he engaged most directly – and how penetratingly – in specifically philosophical reflection. Philosophical reflection should be understood as "transcendental," that is to say concerned with a particular kind of investigation of the question of principles. It soon becomes apparent that in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud is not really preoccupied with the exceptions to that principle, they are not what he means by the "beyond" of the title. All the apparent exceptions which he considers, such as the unpleasure and the "reality" which the reality principle imposes on us, the conflicts which cause what is pleasurable to one part of us to be felt as unpleasure by another, the games by means of which we try to reproduce and to master unpleasant experiences, or even those functional disturbances or transference phenomena from which we learn that wholly and unequivocally unpleasurable events are nevertheless reproduced with obstinate regularity – all these are treated by Freud as merely apparent exceptions which could still be reconciled with the pleasure principle. In other words there are no exceptions to the principle – though there would indeed seem to be some rather strange complications in the workings of

pleasure. This is precisely where the problem arises, for though nothing contradicts the pleasure principle and everything can always be reconciled with it, it is far from obvious that it can account for all the various elements and processes which go to make its application so complicated. Everything might well be governed by the pleasure principle without therefore being finally dependent on it, and since the demands of the reality principle are no more adequate to account for the complications involved, these being more often the products of fantasy, we must conclude that the pleasure principle, though it may rule over all, does not have the final or highest authority over all. There are no exceptions to the principle but there is a residue that is irreducible to it, nothing contradicts the principle, but there remains something which falls outside it and is not homogeneous with it — something, in short, *beyond*.

At this point we need to resort to philosophical reflection. What we call a principle or law is, in the first place, that which governs a particular field; it is in this sense that we speak of an empirical principle or a law. Thus we say that the pleasure principle governs life universally and without exception. But there is another and quite distinct question, namely in virtue of what is a field governed by a principle; there must be a principle of another kind, a second-order principle, which accounts for the necessary compliance of the field with the empirical principle. It is this second-order principle that we call transcendental. Pleasure is a principle insofar as it governs our psychic life. But we must still ask what is the highest authority which subjects our psychic life to the dominance of this principle. Already Hume had remarked that though psychic life clearly exhibits and distinguishes between pleasures and pains, we could never, no matter how exhaustively we examined our ideas of pain and pleasure, derive from them a principle in accordance with which we seek

pleasure and avoid pain. We find Freud saying much the same as we continually encounter pleasures and pains in psychic life, but they are found scattered here and there in a free state, "unbound." That the pleasure principle should nevertheless be so organized that we systematically seek pleasure and avoid pain makes it imperative that we should look for a higher type of explanation for there is in short something that the pleasure principle cannot account for and that necessarily falls outside it, namely its own particular status, the fact that it has dominance over the whole of psychic life. In virtue of what higher connection — what "binding" power — is pleasure a principle, with the dominance that it has? Freud's problem, we may say, is the very opposite of what it is often supposed to be, for he is concerned not with the exceptions to the principle but with its *foundation*. His problem is a transcendental one: the discovery of a transcendental principle — a problem, as Freud puts it, for "speculation."

Freud's answer is that the binding of excitation alone makes it "resolvable" into pleasure, that is to say makes its discharge possible. Without the process of binding, discharges and pleasures would still no doubt occur but only in a scattered, haphazard manner, with no systematic value. It is the binding process which makes pleasure as the principle of mental life possible. Eros thus emerges as the foundation of the pleasure-principle behind the twin aspects of the binding process — the energetic which binds excitation, and the biological which binds the cells (the first being perhaps dependent on, or at least helped by specially favorable conditions obtaining in the second). The "binding" action of Eros, which is constitutive of the pleasure principle may, and indeed must, be characterized as "repetition" — repetition in respect of excitation, and repetition of the *moment* of life, and the necessary union — necessary indeed even in the case of unicellular organisms.

It is in the nature of a transcendental inquiry that we cannot break it off when we please. No sooner have we reached the condition or ground of our principle than we are hurled headlong beyond to the absolutely unconditioned, the "ground-less" from which the ground itself emerged. Musil wrote: "What fearful power, what awesome divinity is repetition! It is the pull of the void that drags us deeper and deeper down like the ever-widening gullet of a whirlpool. For we know it well all along: it was none other than the deep and sinful fall into a world where repetition drags one down lower and lower at each step..."³¹ We remarked earlier that repetition characterized the binding process inasmuch as it is repetition of the very moment of excitation, the moment of the emergence of life; repetition is what holds together the instant, it constitutes simultaneity. But inseparable from this form of the repetition we must conceive of another which in its turn repeats *what was before the instant* — before excitation disturbed the indifference of the inexcitable and life stirred the inanimate from its sleep. How indeed could excitation be bound and thereby discharged except by this double action of repetition, which on the one hand binds the excitation and on the other tends to eliminate it? Beyond Eros we encounter Thanatos, beyond the ground, the abyss of the groundless; beyond the repetition that links, the repetition that erases and destroys. It is hardly surprising that Freud's writings should be so complex, sometimes he suggests that repetition is one and the same agency, acting now demonically, now beneficently, in Thanatos and in Eros; elsewhere he contradicts this by insisting on the strictest qualitative difference between Eros and Thanatos, the difference being that between union, the construction of ever larger units, and destruction; elsewhere again he tones down the strictly dualistic hypothesis by suggesting that what probably underlies the qualitative difference is a difference in rhythm

and amplitude, a difference on a time-scale — according as repetition is repetition *at* the origination of life, or *before* — it should be understood that repetition as conceived by Freud's genius is in and of itself a synthesis of time — a "transcendental" synthesis. It is at once repetition of *before*, *during* and *after*, that is to say it is a constitution in time of the past, the present and even the future. From a transcendental viewpoint — past, present and future are constituted in time *simultaneously*, even though, from the natural standpoint, there is between them a qualitative difference, the past following upon the present and the present upon the future. Hence the threefold determination which we brought out in Freud's treatment: a monism, a qualitative dualism and a difference in rhythm. If it is possible to add the future (i.e., *after*) to the other two dimensions of repetition (i.e., *before* and *during*), it is because these two correlative structures cannot constitute the synthesis of time without immediately opening up to and making for the possibility of a future in time. To repetition that binds — constituting the present — and repetition that erases — constituting the past — we must add a third, that saves or fails to save, depending on the modes of combination of the other two. (Hence the decisive role of transference as a progressive repetition which liberates and saves — or fails.)

We saw that repetition came before the pleasure principle as the unconditioned condition of the principle. If we now return to experience, we find that the order is reversed, and repetition subordinated to the principle, it is now at the service of the pleasure since we tend to repeat what has been found to be pleasurable or is anticipated to be. Our transcendental inquiry showed that while Eros is what makes possible the establishment of the empirical pleasure principle, it is always necessarily and inseparably linked with Thanatos. Neither Eros nor Thanatos can be given in experience, all that is given are combinations of both — the role

of Eros being to bind the energy of Thanatos and to subject these combinations to the pleasure principle in the id. This is why Eros, although it is no more given in experience than Thanatos, at least makes its presence felt, it is an active force. Whereas Thanatos is the ground-less, supported and brought to the surface by Eros, remains essentially silent and all the more terrible. Thanatos is it is an absolute. And yet the "no" does not exist in the unconscious because destruction is always presented as the other side of a construction, as an instinctual drive which is necessarily combined with Eros.

What then is the meaning of *defusion* of the instincts? We may put it differently and ask what becomes of the combination of the instincts when we no longer consider the id but the ego, the superego and their complementarity. Freud showed how the formation of the narcissistic ego and of the superego both implied a "desexualization." A certain quantity of libido (Eros-energy) is neutralized, and becomes undifferentiated and freely mobile. The desexualization process would seem to be profoundly different in each case: in the first it is the equivalent of a process of *idealization*, which can perhaps constitute the power of the imagination in the ego; in the second it is the equivalent of *identification*, which would constitute the power of thought in the superego. Desexualization has two possible effects on the workings of the pleasure principle: either it introduces functional disturbances which affect the application of the principle, or else it promotes a sublimation of the instincts whereby pleasure is transcended in favor of gratifications of a different kind. In any case it would be a mistake to view defusion in terms of invalidation of the pleasure principle, as though the combinations that are subject to it were destroyed in favor of the emergence of Eros and Thanatos in their pure form. Defusion, with respect to the ego and the superego, simply means the formation of this freely mobile energy within

the various combinations. The pleasure principle in itself is not in the least invalidated, however serious the disturbances which may affect the function responsible for its application. (Thus Freud could still maintain his wish-fulfillment theory of the dream, even in those cases of traumatic neurosis where the dream function is most seriously perturbed.) Nor is the pleasure principle overturned by the renunciations which reality imposes upon it, or by the spiritual extensions brought about by sublimation. We may never encounter Thanatos; its voice is never heard, for life is lived through and through under the sway of the empirical pleasure principle and the combinations that are subject to it — though the formulae governing the combinations may vary considerably.

Is there no other solution besides the functional disturbance in neurosis and the spiritual outlet of sublimation? Could there not be a third alternative which would be related not to the functional interdependence of the ego and the superego, but to the structural split between them? And is not this the very alternative collected by Freud under the name of *perversion*? It is remarkable that the process of *desexualization* is even more pronounced than in neurosis and sublimation; it operates with extraordinary coldness; but it is accompanied by a *resexualization* which does not in any way cancel out the desexualization, since it operates on a new dimension which is equally remote from functional disturbances and from sublimations: it is as if the desexualized element were resexualized but nevertheless retained, in a different form, the original desexualization; the desexualized has become itself the object of sexualization. This explains why coldness is the essential feature of the structure of perversion; it is present both in the apathy of the sadist, where it figures as theory, and in the ideal of the masochist, where it figures as fantasy. The deeper the coldness of the desexualization, the more powerful and extensive the process of perverse resexualization; hence we can-

not define perversion in terms of a mere failure of integration. Sade tried to demonstrate that no passion, whether it be political ambition, avariciousness, etc., is free from "lust" — not that lust is their mainspring but rather that it arises at their culmination, when it becomes the agent of their instantaneous resexualization. (Juliette, when she discoursed on how to maximize the power of sadistic projection, began by giving the following advice: "For a whole fortnight abstain from all lustful behaviour; distract and entertain yourselves with other things. . .") Although the coldness of the masochist is totally different from the sadist's, the desexualization process in masochism is equally the precondition of instantaneous resexualization, as a result of which all the passions of man, whether they concern property, money, the State, etc., are transformed and put at the service of masochism. The crucial point is that resexualization takes place instantaneously, in a sort of leap. Here again, the pleasure principle is not overthrown, but retains its full empirical dominance. The sadist derives pleasure from other people's pain, and the masochist from suffering pain himself as a necessary precondition of pleasure. Nietzsche stated the essentially religious problem of the meaning of pain and gave it the only fitting answer: if pain and suffering have any meaning, it must be that they are enjoyable to someone. From this viewpoint there are only three possibilities: the first, which is the "normal" one, is of a moral and sublime character: it states that pain is pleasing to the gods who contemplate and watch over man; the other two are perverse and state that pain is enjoyable either to the one who inflicts it or to the one who suffers it. It should be clear that the normal answer is the most fantastic, the most psychotic of the three. So far as the structure of perversion is concerned, given that the pleasure principle must retain its dominance here as elsewhere, we must ask what has happened to the combinations which are normally subject to the

principle? What is the significance of the resexualization, the leap? Earlier we became aware of the particular role played by the function of reiteration in masochism no less than in sadism: it takes the form of quantitative accumulation and precipitation in sadism and qualitative suspense and "freezing" in masochism. In this respect, the manifest content of the perversion is liable to obscure the deeper issues, for the apparent link of sadism with pain and the apparent link of masochism with pain are in fact subordinate to the function of reiteration. Evil as defined by Sade is indistinguishable from the perpetual movement of raging molecules: the games imagined by Clairwil are so intended as to ensure perpetual repercussions and liberate repetition from all constraints. Again, in Saint-Fond's system, the value of punishment lies solely in its capacity for infinite reproduction through the agency of destructive molecules. In another context we noted that masochistic pain depends entirely on the phenomenon of waiting and on the functions of repetition and reiteration which characterize waiting. This is the essential point: *pain only acquires significance in relation to the forms of repetition which condition its use.* This is pointed out by Klossowski, when he writes with reference to the monotony of Sade: "The carnal act can only constitute a transgression if it is experienced as a spiritual event, but in order to apprehend its object it is necessary to circumscribe and reproduce that event in a reiterated description of the carnal act. This reiterated description not only accounts for the transgression but it is in itself a transgression of language by language." Or again when he emphasizes the role of repetition, in relation this time to masochism and the frozen scenes of masochism: "I feel re-creating itself in order to recover itself in its fall, as if holding its breath in an instantaneous apprehension of its origin."²¹

Such a conclusion would nevertheless seem to be disappointing, insofar as it suggests that repetition can be reduced to a pleas-

urable experience. There is a profound mystery in the bit ^{4,261} 19. Beneath the sound and lury of sadism and masochism the terrible force of repetition is at work. What is altered here is the normal function of repetition in its relation to the pleasure principle, instead of repetition being experienced as a form of behavior related to a pleasure already obtained or anticipated, instead of repetition being governed by the idea of experiencing or experiencing pleasure, repetition runs wild and becomes independent of all previous pleasure. It has itself become an idea or ideal. Pleasure is now a form of behavior related to repetition, accompanying and following repetition, which has itself become an awesome, independent force. Pleasure and repetition have thus exchanged roles, as a consequence of the instantaneous leap, that is to say the twofold process of desexualization and resexualization. In between the two processes the Death Instinct seems about to speak, but because of the nature of the leap, which is instantaneous, it is always the pleasure principle that prevails. There is a kind of mysticism in perversion: the greater the renunciation, the greater and the more secure the gains; we might compare it to a "black" theology where pleasure ceases to motivate the will and is abjured, disavowed, "renounced," the better to be recovered as a reward or consequence, and as a law. The formula of perverse mysticism is coldness and comfort (the coldness of desexualization, on the one hand, and the comfort of resexualization, on the other, the latter being clearly illustrated by Sade's characters). As for the anchoring of sadism and masochism in pain, this cannot really be understood so long as it is considered in isolation: pain in this case has no sexual significance at all; on the contrary it represents a desexualization which makes repetition autonomous and gives it instantaneous sway over the pleasures of resexualization. Eros is desexualized and humiliated for the sake of a resexualized Thanatos. In sadism and masochism there is no

obvious link between pain and pleasure; the mystery lies in the desexualization process which consolidates repetition at the opposite pole to pleasure, and in the subsequent resexualization which makes the pleasure of repetition seemingly proceed from pain. In sadism no less than in masochism, there is no direct relation to pain: pain should be regarded as an effect only.

Sadistic Superego and Masochistic Ego

When we consider the psychoanalytic interpretation of the derivation of masochism from sadism (there being in this respect no great difference between Freud's two interpretations, in the first the existence of primary masochism is implied despite his assertion to the contrary; in the second Freud recognizes the existence of the primary masochism, but goes on to maintain that for a complete account of masochism we need the hypothesis of the turning around of sadism upon the subject), it would appear that the sadist's superego is singularly weak, while the masochist suffers from an overwhelming superego which causes sadism to be turned against the ego. Other psychoanalytic interpretations which do not link the process of turning around with the superego should nevertheless be seen either as attempts to complement the Freudian theory, or as variants of it, insofar as they retain the general hypothesis of a reversal of sadism and with it that of a sadomasochistic entity. To simplify matters, we may therefore consider the theory which posits an original aggressive instinct followed by the turning around of aggression upon the subject through the agency of the superego. The transformation into masochism would take place by a transfer of the aggressive component to the superego, which would then cause sadism to be turned around upon the

ego. This is essentially the kind of etiology which leads to the assumption of a sadomasochistic entity. But the line of projection is far from direct: it is broken at many points and maps out the various symptoms very imperfectly.

The masochistic ego is only apparently crushed by the superego. What insolence and humor, what irrepressible defiance and ultimate triumph lie hidden behind an ego that claims to be so weak. The weakness of the ego is a strategy by which the masochist manipulates the woman into the ideal state for the performance of the role he has assigned to her. If the masochist is lacking in anything, it would be a superego and not an ego at all. In projecting the superego onto the beating woman, the masochist appears to externalize it merely in order to emphasize its derogatory nature and make it serve the ends of the triumphant ego. One could say almost the opposite of the sadist: he has a powerful and overwhelming superego and nothing else. The sadist's superego is so strong that he has become identified with it, he is his own superego and can only find an ego in the external world. What normally confers a moral character on the superego is the internal and complementary ego upon which it exerts its severity, and equally the maternal element which fosters the close interaction between ego and superego. But when the superego runs wild, expelling the ego along with the mother-image, then its fundamental immorality exhibits itself as sadism. The ultimate victims of the sadist are the mother and the ego. *His ego exists only in the external world: this is the fundamental significance of sadistic apathy. The sadist has no other ego than that of his victims; he is thus monstrously reduced to a pure superego which exercises its cruelty to the furthest extent and instantaneously recovers its full sexuality as soon as it diverts its power outward. The fact that the sadist has no other ego than that of his victims explains the apparent paradox of sadism, its pseudomasochism. The libertine enjoys*

in inflicting the pain he inflicts upon others; when the destructive madness is deflected outward it is accompanied by an identification with the external victim. The irony of sadism lies in the twofold operation whereby he necessarily projects his dissolved ego outward and as a result experiences what is outside him as his only ego. There is no real unity with masochism here, nor any common cause, but a process which is quite specific to sadism — a pseudomasochism which is entirely and exclusively sadistic and which is only apparently and crudely similar to masochism. Irony is in fact the operation of an overbearing superego, the art of splitting or negating the ego, with all its sadistic consequences.

In order to interpret masochism it is not sufficient to reverse the pattern obtaining in sadism. It is true that in masochism the ego triumphs and the superego can only appear from outside, in the form of the torturers. But there are significant differences. In the first place the superego is not negated as the ego is in the sadistic operation; the superego retains in appearance its power and its pass judgment. Furthermore, the more power it retains, the more this power appears derogatory, a mere disguise for something else. The beating woman embodies the superego but only in an utterly derogatory capacity, as one might display the hide of an animal or a trophy after the hunt. For in reality the superego is expelled — not, however, as the result of an active negation but of a disavowal.⁴⁰ The beating woman represents the superego superficially and in the external world, and she also transforms the superego into the recipient of the beating, the essential victim. This explains the conspiracy of the mother-figure and the ego against the father's likeness. *The father's likeness represents both genital sexuality and the superego as an agent of repression: the one is expelled with the other.*⁴⁰ Therein lies the humor which is not merely the opposite of irony but has its own autonomous function. Humor is the triumph of the ego over the superego, to

which it seems to say: "You see, whatever you do, you are already dead; you only exist as a caricature; the woman who beats me supposedly stands for you, and yet it is in fact you yourself who are being beaten in me. . . I disavow you since you negate yourself." The ego triumphs, and asserts its autonomy in pain, its parthenogenetic rebirth from pain, pain being experienced as inflicted upon the superego. We do not believe, as Freud did, that humor is the expression of a strong superego. Freud recognized that humor inevitably brings about a secondary gain for the ego and spoke of the defiance and invulnerability of the ego and of the triumph of narcissism, with the complicity of the superego. But the ego-gain is not "secondary," as Freud thought, but primary or essential. We should be falling into the trap of humor we were to take literally the picture it gives of the superego, for this picture is intended to laugh away and disavow the superego, the very prohibitions of the superego becoming the precondition for obtaining the forbidden pleasure. Humor is the operation of a triumphant ego, the art of deflecting and disavowing the superego, with all its masochistic consequences. Thus there is a pseudosadism in masochism, just as there is a pseudomasochism in sadism. This specifically masochistic sadism, which attacks the superego in the ego and outside it is not in any way related to the sadism of the sadist.

There is a progression in sadism from the negative to negation; that is, from the negative as a partial process of destruction endlessly reiterated, to negation as an absolute idea of reason. It is indeed the vicissitudes of the superego in sadism which account for this progression. Insofar as the sadistic superego expels the ego and projects it into its victims, it is always faced with the task of destroying something outside itself again and again: insofar as it specifies or determines a peculiar "ego-ideal" — identification with its victims — it must add up and totalize all the par-

ticular processes in an attempt to transcend them toward an idea of pure negation which constitutes the cold purity of thought in the superego. Thus the superego represents the apex of the desexualization process specific to sadism: the operation of totalizing extracts a neutral or displaceable energy from the combinations in which the negative only features as partial process. But at the culmination of desexualization a total resexualization takes place, which now bears on the neutral energy as well as thought. This is where the demonstrative impetus, and the speculative speeches and discourses which embody this energy are not extraneous combinations of Sade's novels, but the essential components of the instantaneous operation on which the whole of sadism is based. The essential operation of sadism is the sexualization of thought and of the speculative process as such: insofar as these are the product of the superego.

In masochism we find a progression from disavowal to suspense, from disavowal as a process of liberation from the pressures of the superego to suspense as incarnation of the ideal. Disavowal is a qualitative process that transfers to the oral mother the position and privileges of the phallus. Suspense points to the new status of the ego and to the ideal of rebirth through the agency of the maternal phallus. From the interplay of disavowal and suspense there arises in the ego a qualitative relation of imagination, which is very different from the quantitative relation of thought to the superego. Disavowal is a reaction of the imagination, as negation is an operation of the intellect or of thought. Disavowal challenges the superego and entrusts the mother with the power to give birth to an "ideal ego" which is pure, autonomous and independent of the superego. The process of disavowal is linked to castration not contingently but essentially and originally; the expression of fetishistic disavowal, "No, the mother does not lack a phallus" is not one particular form of disavowal among others,

identification and uses the father-image to produce a superego, which in turn appoints an "ego-ideal" as an ideal of authority, which brings into play forces from outside the subject's narcissistic ego.⁴¹ Of course, the polarity of ego and superego, ideal ego and ego ideal and the types of desexualization corresponding to them may occur together in a structural whole, where they give rise not only to a great variety of forms of sublimation, but equivalent to the most serious functional disturbances (thus Lagache can interpret mania in terms of the functional dominance of the superego-ego ideal). But even more significant is the possibility that these two poles of desexualization should operate within differentiated or dissociated structures of perversions and bring about a perverse resexualization which confers upon each a complete structural self-sufficiency.

Masochism is a story that relates how the superego was destroyed and by whom, and what was the sequel to this destruction. Sometimes the story is misunderstood and one is led to think that the superego triumphs at the very point when it is dying. This is the danger in any story, with its unavoidable "gaps." The masochist is saying, with all the weight of his symptoms and his fantasies, "Once upon a time there were three women. . . ." He tells of the war they wage on one another, resulting in the triumph of the oral mother. He introduces himself into this age-old story by means of a very specific act, the instrument of which is the modern contract — with the most curious consequences, for he abjures the father's likeness and the sexuality which it confers, and at the same time challenges the father-image as the repressive authority which regulates this sexuality and which is constitutive of the superego. In opposition to the institutional superego he now establishes the contractual partnership between the ego and the

oral mother. Intermediate between the first mother and the third mother, or lover, the oral mother functions as an image of death, holding up to the ego the cold mirror of its twofold rejection. But death can only be imagined as a second birth, a parthenogenesis from which the ego reemerges, liberated from the superego as well as from sexuality. The reflection of the ego in and through death produces the ideal ego in the conditions of independence and autonomy which obtain in masochism. The narcissistic ego contemplates the ideal ego in the maternal mirror of death: such is the story begun by Cain with the aid of Eve, continued by Christ with the aid of the Virgin Mary, and revived by Sabbatai (Zvi) with the help of Miriam, and such is the masochistic visionary, with his prodigious vision of "the death of God." But the narcissistic ego benefits from this split in that it becomes resexualized in proportion as the ideal ego becomes desexualized. This is why the most extreme punishments and the most intense pains acquire in this context such a very peculiar erotic function in relation to the death image — now represented on the one hand by the ideal ego, the desexualization process which liberates it both from the superego and from the father's likeness, and on the other hand by the narcissistic ego, the resexualization that allows it to enjoy the pleasures that the superego forbids.

Sadism likewise tells a story. It relates how the ego, in an entirely different context and in a different struggle, is beaten and expelled; how the unrestrained superego assumes an exclusive role, modeled on an inflated conception of the father's role — the mother and the ego becoming its choice victims. Desexualization, now represented by the superego, ceases to be of a moral or moralizing character, since it is no longer directed upon an inner ego but is turned outward, upon external victims who take on the quality of the rejected ego. The Death Instinct now assumes the character of a Thought of a fearful nature, an idea of

demonstrative reason, and resexualization bears on the "ego ideal" of the sadistic "thinker," who thus turns out to be in every way the opposite of the masochistic visionary. Indeed, he recounts a different story altogether.

We have merely been trying to demonstrate the following: it is always possible to speak of violence and cruelty in sexual behavior and to show that these phenomena can be combined with sexuality in different ways; it is always possible, furthermore, to contrive means of passing from one combination to another. It is assumed that the *same person* enjoys both undergoing pain and inflicting it, and imaginary points of turning back and turning around are accordingly set up and applied to an extensive and ill-defined whole. On the strength of transformist presuppositions, the unity of sadism and masochism is simply taken for granted. Our intention has been to show that this approach only leads to very crude and ill-differentiated concepts. In order to prove the unity of sadism and masochism one proceeds as follows. From the point of view of etiology, sadism and masochism are each deprived of some of their components in order to ensure that the two types of perversion can transform into each other (thus the superego, which is an essential component of sadism, is actually treated as the point where sadism reverses into masochism; similarly for the ego, which is an essential component of masochism). From the symptomatological viewpoint, crude common symptoms, vaguely analogous manifestations and approximate "coincidences" are treated as proof of the existence of a sadomasochistic entity (for example, the "masochism" of the sadist and the "sadism" of the masochist). And yet no doctor would treat a fever as though it were a definite symptom of a specific disease; he views it rather as an indeterminate syndrome common to a number of possible diseases. The same is true of sadomasochism: it is a syndrome of perversion in general which must be broken down to make way

for a differential diagnosis. The belief in a sadomasochistic entity is not really grounded in genuine psychoanalytic thinking but in pre-Freudian thinking which relied on hasty assimilations and faulty etiological interpretations that psychoanalysis merely helped to make more convincing, instead of questioning their reality.

This is why it is necessary to read Masoch. His work has suffered from unfair neglect, when we consider that Sade has been the object of such penetrating studies both in the field of literary criticism and in that of psychoanalytic interpretation, to the benefit of both. But it would be equally unfair to read Masoch with Sade in mind, and with the intention of finding in his work a proof or verification that sadism effectively reverses into masochism, even if masochism in turn evolves toward a form of sadism. The genius of Sade and that of Masoch are poles apart; their worlds do not communicate, and as novelists their techniques are totally different. Sade expresses himself in a form which combines obscenity in description with rigor and apathy in demonstration, while the art of Masoch consists in multiplying the disavowals in order to create the coldness of aesthetic suspense. There is no reason to suppose that Masoch would suffer from such a confrontation. Influenced by his Slavic background and by German Romanticism, Masoch makes use of all the resources of fantasy and suspense rather than of the romantic dream. By his techniques alone he is a great writer; by his use of folklore he manages to tap the forces of the myth, just as Sade was able to achieve the full power of demonstration by his use of descriptions. The fact that their names have been linked with two basic perversions should remind us that diseases are named after their symptoms rather than after their causes. Etiology, which is the scientific or experimental side of medicine, must be subordinated to symptomatology, which is its literary, artistic aspect. Only on this condition can we avoid splitting the semiological unity of a dis-

turbance, or uniting very different disturbances under a misbegotten name, in a whole arbitrarily defined by nonspecific causes.

Sadomasochism is one of these misbegotten names, a semiological howler. We found in every case that what appeared to be a common "sign" linking the two perversions together turned out on investigation to be in the nature of a mere syndrome which could be further broken down into irreducibly specific symptoms of the one or the other perversion. Let us now try to summarize the results of our inquiry. (1) Sadism is speculative-demonstrative, masochism dialectical-imaginative; (2) sadism operates with the negative and pure negation, masochism with disavowal and suspension; (3) sadism operates by means of quantitative reiteration, masochism by means of qualitative suspense; (4) there is a masochism specific to the sadist and equally a sadism specific to the masochist, the one never combining with the other; (5) sadism negates the mother and inflates the father, masochism disavows the mother and abolishes the father; (6) the role and significance of the fetish, and the function of the fantasy are totally different in each case; (7) there is an aestheticism in masochism, while sadism is hostile to the aesthetic attitude; (8) sadism is institutional, masochism contractual; (9) in sadism the superego and the process of identification play the primary role, masochism gives primacy to the ego and to the process of idealization; (10) sadism and masochism exhibit totally different forms of desexualization and resexualization; (11) finally, summing up all these differences, there is the most radical difference between sadistic apathy and masochistic coldness.

These eleven propositions taken together should account not only for the differences between sadism and masochism, but equally for the differences in the literary techniques and in the art of Sade and Masoch.

Notes

1. Krafft-Ebing himself points out the existence of "passive flagellation" independently from masochism. Cf. *Psychopathia Sexualis* (revised by Moll, 1963).

2. Georges Bataille, *Eroticism*. Engl. tr. M. Dalwood (Calderbooks, 1965), pp. 187, 188, 189.

3. Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis*, pp. 208-9.

4. Cf. Appendix III.

5. To cut off a pigtail would not seem in this instance to imply any hostility toward the fetish; it is merely the necessary condition of its constitution. We cannot allude to hair despoilers without drawing attention to a psychiatric problem of historical importance. Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis*, revised by Moll, is a compendium of cases of the most abominable perversions for the use of doctors and jurists, as the subtitle indicates. Assault, crime, bestiality, duennschmelling, oocrophilia, etc., are all treated with the appropriate scientific detachment, without passion or value-judgment. With case 396, however, the tone changes abruptly: "a dangerous pigtail fetishist was spreading anxiety in Berlin. . . ." And this comment follows: "These people are so dangerous that they ought definitely to be subject to long-term confinement in an asylum until their eventual recovery. They do not by any means deserve unqualified leniency. . . . When I think of the immense sorrow caused to a family in which a young girl is thus deprived of her beautiful hair, I find it quite impossible to understand that such people are not confined indefinitely in an asy-

lum.... Let us hope that the new penal law will remedy this situation." Such an indignant explosion against a relatively harmless perversion seems to indicate that powerful personal motivations lay behind the author's departure from his usual scientific objectivity. When he reached case 396, the psychiatrist allowed his feelings to get the better of him — let this be a lesson to us all.

6. Letter to his brother Charles on 5th January 1869 (quoted by Wanda).

7. Maurice Blanchot, *Lautréamont et Sade* (Minuit, Collection "Arguments," 1963), p. 40.

8. *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, The Complete Psychological Works (Hogarth, 1955-64), Vol. VII, p. 159.

9. "The instincts and their vicissitudes," in *Papers on Metapsychology*, Collected Papers (1946), Vol. IV, p. 73.

10. Cf. Appendix I.

11. Cf. Bachofen, *Das Mutterrecht* (1861). An example of a work owing much to Bachofen's ideas is the excellent book *L'institution sexuelle et l'évolution religieuse*, by Pierre Gordon (P.U.F., 1946).

12. Cf. Appendix I.

13. E. Bergler, *The Basic Neurosis* (New York: Grune, 1949).

14. Theodore Reik, *Masochism in Sex and Society*, Engl. tr. M.H. Reigel and G.M. Kurth (Grove Press, 1962), pp. 21, 209.

15. Pierre Klossowski, "Elements d'une étude psychanalytique sur le Marquis de Sade," *Revue de Psychanalyse*, 1933.

16. An illustration of the difference in nature between the two prostitution fantasies, the sadistic and the masochistic, may be found in Klossowski's tale *Le Souffleur*; cf. the contrast between "L'Hôtel de Longchamp" and "les lots de l'hospitalité."

17. The author's use of "the symbolic (order)" or (the order of) the real should be understood in the context of the fundamental distinction established by Jacques Lacan between three "orders" or dimensions: the Symbolic, the Imaginary and the Real. (Translators' note.)

18. Cf. Jacques Lacan, *La Psychanalyse*, I, pp. 48 ff. As defined by Lacan, the mechanism of repudiation or foreclosure, *Verwerfung*, operates in the sym-

bolic dimension and in connection with the father, more specifically "the name of the father." Lacan appears to look upon this as a primary and irreducible operation which is independent of all maternal influences: the distortion of the mother's role would on the contrary arise as a result of the symbolic "repudiation" of the father. Cf. however the article by a follower of Lacan, Pierre Aulagnier, "Remarques sur la structure psychotique," *La Psychanalyse*, VIII, which would seem to restore to some extent to the mother an active role as symbolic agent.

19. Reik, *Masochism*, p. 18.

20. Cf. Appendix III.

21. Maurice Blanchot, *Lautréamont et Sade*, p. 35.

22. Reik, *Masochism*, pp. 44-91.

23. Cf. Appendix II.

24. *Pygmalion*: form of masochism where the subject imagines he is a page-boy attending the woman.

25. This is the essential thesis of *Institutions Républicaines*.

26. On the elusive character of the object of the law, cf. J. Lacan's commentaries relating both to Kant and to Sade: *Kant avec Sade* (Critique, 1963).

27. *Civilization and its Discontents*, Complete Psychological Works, Vol. XXI, pp. 125, 128.

28. Theodore Reik, *Masochism*. "The masochist exhibits the punishment but also its failure. He shows his submission certainly, but he also shows his invisible rebellion, demonstrating that he gains pleasure despite the discomfort.... He cannot be broken from outside. He has an inexhaustible capacity for taking a beating and yet knows unconsciously he is not licked" (pp. 145, 163).

29. *Revue Bleue*, 1888.

30. On the link between agrarian and incestuous themes and the role of the plough, cf. Salvador Dalí's brilliant text in *Mythe tragique de l'Angeles de Miller*, Pauvert.

31. Masoch's tale is a relatively accurate account of the life of Sabartai Zwi. Another account may be found in GRUN, *History of the Jews*, where the hero's historical importance is emphasized.

32. Letter to his brother Charles on January 8, 1869.

33. B. Grünberger, in "Esquisse d'une théorie psychodynamique du masochisme," *Revue Française de Psychanalyse* (1954), disagrees with Oedipal interpretations of masochism, but he replaces the "murder of the Oedipal father" by a pre-genital wish to castrate the father, regarded as the true source of masochism. In any case, he does not accept the maternal-oral etiology.

34. "The instincts and their vicissitudes" in *Papers on Metapsychology*.

35. This second explanation, which was offered by Grünberger, traces masochism back to a pre-Oedipal source.

36. These three aspects are formally distinguished in an article written in 1924, "The economic problem of masochism," but they are already indicated in the first interpretation.

37. Reik, p. 186.

38. Masl, *The Man without Qualities*. (Translator's note: this passage does not seem to be included in the English translation of this work.)

39. Klossowski; *Un si jeune désir* (N.R.F.), p. 127, and *La révolution de l'Édit de Nantes* (Minuit), p. 15.

40. *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*, Complete Psychological Works, Vol. VIII.

41. Cf. Daniel Lagache, "La psychanalyse et la structure de la personnalité," *La Psychanalyse*, 6, pp. 36-47.